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Virtua **Fighter 4**

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- :: A Look at the Characters of Hunter: The Reckoning





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**DON'T EAT THE
YELLOW SNOW!**

Letter from the Editor ::

Is it March already? It seems like it's only been a few weeks since we first took our final Xboxes and GameCubes for a test drive – and now we're almost at the end of the first quarter of the new year. While January and February are traditionally slow months for gamers, things always start to get more interesting in March. Ironically, the games that most people are talking about this month aren't from Sony, Nintendo, or Microsoft. Whether it's giving Xbox owners the challenging shooter *GUNVAL-KYRIE*, throwing down the gauntlet on PS2 with *Virtua Fighter 4*, or broadening GameCube's sports lineup with *Soccer Slam*, *NBA 2K2*, and *Home Run King*, Sega is delivering on its promise to turn heads no matter what platform you own.

With that in mind, this issue of IGN Unplugged not only contains an early review of *Virtua Fighter 4* but also a look at what could be the first true RPG for GameCube, *Skies of Arcadia*. And it's not all about Sega, of course. Flip through this PDF mag and you will find an in-depth interview with the guys behind the promising multi-platformer *Vexx*, info on gear, movies, and DVDs, as well as a slew of game previews not yet available on our site. Print it out or read it on your monitor – either way, enjoy what this latest copy of IGN Unplugged has to offer.

Oh, and just so you know, Tal's not dead or fired, he just has jury duty, so he probably wishes he was dead right now.

– Peer Schneider

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EMAIL OF THE MONTH ::

Hiiii
How are youuuuuuuuu?
look to the digital picture it's my love
vvvery verrrry fffffunny :-)
my life = my car
my car = my house

- Mark Jung, CEO of Snowball

DVD ::

6.1 Audio

I just got into the DTS surround sound world by spending about \$400 on some JBL speakers and about another \$400 on a Sony receiver. But now I'm seeing that more and more DVDs are going from 5.1 to 6.1, should I pack up my receiver and exchange it for one with some 6.1 DTS sound on it? or should I just keep with my 5.1 for now?

- JackH20

***Jeremy responds:** If you want to be set for the next few years and have no problem exchanging the receiver, go for it. However, there are still very few movies that truly take advantage of the sixth channel when compared to the number of DVDs that are in 5.1.*

Terminator DVDs

I have the Terminator 2: Ultimate Edition DVD and I love it. Is there going to be a similar release for the first Terminator film? In your review archive you have a Terminator disc listed, but it basically sucks. The other day at the PX I saw a newer edition of Terminator with a sticker proclaiming an enhanced Dolby 5.1 soundtrack, and the back listed special features like deleted scenes. Is this the version of the film to get, or does it suck like the first version did? And also, is there going to be another edition of this soon? I try to avoid double dipping, being on a budget while at college. Thank you for your time.

- Jason

***Jeremy responds:** The recent MGM special edition of the original Terminator is definitely the one to get. It features a Dolby 5.1 EX soundtrack, and brand new anamorphic widescreen transfer, deleted scenes, a great documentary, and more.*

FilmForce ::

Go Ask Alice

Brian - In a recent story you described the movie version of the game *American McGee's Alice* as "a Gothic-horror version of *Alice in Wonderland*, which takes place after *Alice* has been committed to a mental institution by her wicked aunt."

In the game, *Alice* is committed because she witnessed the fiery death of her parents. This is established in the game's opening and it sets the tone for the whole dark journey into *Wonderland*. I would hate to see them sell out by giving her a wicked aunt. Why would they do this?

- Jacob

***Linder responds:** J - I can't personally vouch for this info since it didn't originate with us - it actually came from the industry trade mag *The Hollywood Reporter*. That said, *THR* is usually a solid source.*

*The wicked aunt... What can I say? That's Hollywood for ya! The studio could be pushing for a "wicked aunt" so they can have someone to blame *Alice's* psychotic issues on - maybe they think it'll look better if their main character doesn't totally*

*snap on her own. I know it's a change from the game, but I really don't think it will affect the quality of the flick. Most of the cool stuff takes place once she arrives in *Wonderland* anyway. I'm lookin' forward to this one.*

No Diesel?

Brian - What is up with the rumors that Vin Diesel would star in *Terminator 3*? I heard it months ago, but nobody is talking about it anymore. What's the deal?

- Nate Dawg

***Linder responds:** Nate - The Vin Diesel/T3 rumor has been around for as long as I can remember - which isn't very long, but whatever. Vin was originally rumored to be playing the main character back when Arnold was saying he wouldn't be in the film. Then when Arnold came around, Vin was rumored to play another terminator in the film. All that went down before the current female terminator story ideas surfaced, and the Vin rumors have since subsided. The film will indeed feature Arnold's cyborg versus a drop-dead-sexy (pun intended) femme terminator played by actress Kirstanna Loken.*

PC Games ::

Making the Game

Yo! First of all, great site, even though I'm not an Insider (yet). Anyway, I live in the semi-great state of Pennsylvania, and the evil, corrupted state government has decreed martial law. Well...not really, but they've actually decreed that ►

everyone who wishes to graduate high school must do an annoying Graduation Project.

I was planning of getting my friends together and making a small video game (like the size of a game demo), but lack the game engine. Is there any way that I could acquire one (for free, it's only for a state required school project) from id Software, EA, Blizzard Entertainment, or elsewhere? There's no way I'm planning on selling it to anyone, if that makes any difference. I look forward to your response.

– Robert

Ivan responds: *A lot of companies freely provide the source code to their products as a means for gamers to be able to edit and expand upon them. id does this with several of its engines, for instance. So long as you abide by the legal requirements of the parties who retain ownership of the code (use common sense, don't infringe on anyone else's property, intellectual or otherwise, and don't sell whatever you make), no one will have any problem with what you create.*

But don't do this. It's an awful lot of work for a beginner. Just use the built in modding or rudimentary editing capabilities that a great many games already offer. Titles like the forth coming Freedom Force allow you to quickly and easily make your own customized heroes and campaigns, while Quake 3 or Bridge Commander are open to nearly endless variations and customizations, ranging from the basic to the technical, to the professionally insane.

Truthfully, because you didn't realize that modding and open-sourced materials were already available, and because you don't know where to find them, I'm led to believe you're new to the creative fields of gaming, and that neither you nor your friends perhaps fully appreciate what a terribly daunting task it is to make even the most basic of games. It's a hard thing to

do, and requires much the way of time, patience, and understanding.

If you still insist on pursuing this as your project, my only advice is that you control your own ambitions, keep your project's scope realistic, and only do the work you have to (make skins instead of models, use novice tools and templates instead of learning the professional ones). As for where you can find all that you need? Well, that's going to be the easy part. Just hit up the forums and websites to your favorite games. If you feel overwhelmed at just doing that, I would strongly encourage that you consider a different project.

Driver Down

Who can I talk to...? I have a new computer with Windows XP and the game disappears after the overview. Is there a "driver" that I can find somewhere on your site that would remedy this? Please advise, Thank you!

– Jim

Ivan responds: *Even though you completely failed at delivering any specifics whatsoever, I can still give you a general answer, supremely cool ass kicker that I am...*

With intentions of putting you in know: drivers are merely pieces of software that control devices in your machine; a device being anything physical (video card, soundcard, hard drive, printer, hamster wheel, whatever). They act as go-betweens, relaying and translating instructions and requests from other pieces of software trying to access those devices. When someone tells you to update your drivers they are implying that the ones you have are dated and are consequently perhaps incompatible with the newest pieces of software because that software requires specific instructions your driver is incapable of translating and conveying to the device it is associated with.

So while drivers and patches are easy ways to remedy most day-to-day problems, there is not one single

universal download to fix everything that might be wrong with your machine, contrary to what the makers of various system maintenance programs might have you believe. Furthermore, drivers and patches can only do what they are supposed to do, nothing more. I'm alluding to the fact that you may be experiencing other problems with your machine completely unrelated to underlying system software.

Windows XP is notorious for incompatibility with older products. Such is the way with forward progress, the new come, and the old go. Ensuring your system is up to date with drivers, OS upgrades, and patches to the specific games themselves is a vital step in retaining functionality, but there will just be some problems that are beyond your control, especially with that particular operating system.

Product technical support is always an excellent source of information and information on the latest updates to these kinds of queries. If you have a problem, chances are a few thousand other people do as well. And out of them, a few hundred have already called support complaining. And answer could very well be available.

Try the official websites related to the game at hand and hardware within your system. IGN itself does not carry patches or driver downloads, but we do often times report on them and direct you to where you might find them.

PlayStation 2 :: Untimely Demise

Will someone please explain the sudden death of Next Generation Magazine? I know that at least one of your editors, Doug Perry, used to work for the mag, so someone should know what happened. Why isn't anyone talking about this? Why so secretive?

– danders15

Dr. Smith responds: *Because there's not really a great deal to say. And ▶*

incidentally, Doug wouldn't be the one to say it – he hasn't worked for Next Gen in years. What happened was simple and unfortunately all too common. Next Gen didn't move enough issues or sell enough ads, so it was no longer profitable to run it in the face of ever-growing competition in the multi-platform magazine market. Too bad, but it happens.

Got Away?

Wasn't there a game called "The Get-away" that was supposed to come out sometime before the world ends? Graphically, it looked sweet. So was it an actual working game or just an elaborate tech demo? Is it ever actually coming out?

– vrome

Rev. Dave responds: *It's still coming out, at least in Europe, probably some time later this year. It certainly is a real game, albeit a somewhat low-profile specimen.*

Xbox ::

You Wanna Get High?

Do you smoke weed? Cause you smell like it. I mean *BLEEP*, you reek bad of that *BLEEP*. My dad thought it was me, but i was like no no dad, it's the girly girl on the x-box site. She smokes weed all day. He didn't believe me and now i'm grounded. thanks alot. Girly Girl. *BLEEP*.

– Stoner

Gamer Grrrrl Hilary responds: *Yeah, I used to blame MacGuyver whenever my mom asked me about that kind of stuff. Really kid, don't do drugs. Then there'll be more for me. I am not a role model, by the way. If you want a role model, go bother Charles Barkley.*

Desperately Seeking A Lil Somethin' Somethin'

I desperately need you to post my letter because if you don't my girlfriend will break up with me because she'll say I'm not cool enough to have you post this.. Show her I'm cool and

post this letter. I'll get to sleep with her for once if you do.. I'm beggin you please. She's a little crazy and this is the only way I can do her fat *BLEEP*. Help me please.

– Jeffrey Fagallo

Gamer Grrrrl Hilary responds: *Oh-kay. Now you're no longer a loser because your message is on IGN Unplugged. Your girlfriend should know that you are possibly the most fantastic man to ever walk the earth. This should impress her, because from the sound of it, she's easily impressed. Really, people, this isn't The Dating Game. I'm not here to help ya get some whoopie. I'm here to talk about games. So, maybe less desperate attempts to impress girls and a few more letters asking about actual games. P.S. Let me know if this helped you any. I am -so- interested. Yeah.*

Game Boy Advance :: GBA Economics

I think a couple months ago you mentioned that there would be a drop in price for Game Boy Advance games. I know the price of the system went down, but that doesn't matter to me!! When will the prices of the games go down? The costs right now are unbelievable, especially for third party games. I think it really only costs around 15-30cents to even manufacture those gamepaks. Anyways if you could send me a reply, then that would be great. Also, keep up the work on the great site.

– Mark

Craig responds: *15 to 30 cents? Are you high? Cartridges are extremely expensive to manufacture, as much as 13 bucks apiece...which includes printing the box, manual, label on the cartridge, as well as the memory chips in the cartridge themselves. They're not cheap like CDs or DVDs...they're silicon, and that costs a whole lot more. The average high price of Game Boy Advance games will come down to around \$34.99 most likely in the next month or so,*

with Nintendo-published games like Super Mario World hitting shelves at the cheaper \$29.99 range.

Lots of Memory

Hi, can you tell me how much Mbits GBA cartridges can store? I heard that they can store up to 512 Mbits, is it true? Finally, what size do you think Golden Sun 2 will be? thank's.

– Des

Craig responds: *Game Boy Advance cartridges can be as small as 32 megabits (four megabytes), and as large as 256 megabits (32 megabytes). Most games come on the 32 or 64 megabit format because they are cheaper to manufacture. Nintendo just released the 128 megabit (16 megabyte) cartridge to developers, but it costs five dollars more each to manufacture than the 64 megabit cartridges...so most publishers will wait until the price of that cartridge comes down before making a 128 megabit game.*

GameCube ::

Final Fantasy Returns

I got to reading that the FF series will go to GameCube on your site. Now what's going on with this – are Nintendo and Square starting to get along again and start patching things up? Or is this a joke?

– Mathieu Lacombe

Matt responds: *No, for once this is not a joke. Nintendo and an unnamed Square affiliate are in cahoots. The company is backed by the Yamauchi-ruled Q Fund, a chunk of cold cash ready to support upstart GameCube development houses. The first project thought to be under development for GameCube is a version of the anime series Final Fantasy Unlimited, which is currently airing on television in Japan. The game, due out before the end of the year, will be originally created for Nintendo's next-generation console and will interact with the Game Boy Advance too. How lovely, yes? Expect more soon.*

■

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Virtua Fighter 4TM



**This is the next generation of fighting.
Knuckle up and get your ass in the ring.**

Virtua Fighter 4 is one of those games for which a single review is practically irrelevant. Fighting games are the subject of more debates, and more bitter ones, than any other genre in games, save perhaps for RPGs. There is this camp, there is that camp, as well as the tree-dwelling psychopaths off in the other direction playing *Asuka 120% Burning Fest Limited*, and never the twain (or whatever the proper word is) shall meet. Arcade culture may be on the wane, long after the days when you could play *Street Fighter* with the local experts at any pizza parlor in the nation, but in a few isolated spots, serious fighting fans still live, and you can be sure they have no interest in what anyone else has to say about their games of choice.

And whose opinion is valid, anyway? Is *Virtua Fighter 4* "better" than *Tekken 4*? Is it "better" than *Dead or Alive 3*? Push.

Who has the experience and the analytical faculties to make that kind of judgment? Fighting games have grown so monstrously complex since the advent of *Street Fighter III*, *VF3*, and ►

GAME DETAILS :: ▼

PUBLISHER :: **SEGA**
 DEVELOPER :: **AM2**
 GENRE :: **FIGHTING**
 PLAYERS :: **2**
 RELEASE DATE :: **MARCH 2002**

Virtua Fighter 4

the second or third *Tekken* that their true depths are practically unfathomable.

Virtua Fighter 4 is a good example of this phenomenon, at least. It is more or less guaranteed that this game's training mode will include tests of timing that you will not be able to master without extensive practice, and not just one or two, as in the case of Hayabusa's Izuna Drop in *DOA3*. Akira's combos alone are so thoroughly befuddling as to force an almost immediate exodus to the button-tapping skills of someone like Lion, or indeed to another game entirely.

There, perhaps, is a clue to what will make *Virtua Fighter 4* good in the eyes of the camp that vigorously proclaims its superiority. It is not the "best," but it is most certainly deep enough for the dedicated to take it as far as they are willing to go. *DOA3*, after all, as our editors' tournament proved, has a certain ceiling, at which point it becomes a sort of three-card-monte. Reverse, reverse, and reverse some more, with every strategy bent around the single end of misdirecting the opponent towards the wrong reversal altitude. A *VF4* tournament around this office, in contrast, would be either a sad joke or very interesting, because no such ceiling would be anywhere in sight. There would be fumbling aplenty, but no two fumbles would be quite alike.

There are no two characters alike here, after all. Even Sarah and Jacky have diverged a fair bit on the way down to the fourth generation of the World Grapple Tournament. The JKD twins each have their own brand of striking. Wolf and Jeffry present two different twists on throw-based characters. Aoi opens up a complex grappling and countermove game. Shun is, as he always has been, a hilarious feat of animation and an even more amusing psych-out strategist. Kage spins a similar philosophy into his bizarre aerial evasion game. For those tired of dodging one way or the other, Vanessa plows straight through opponents with an authentic Vale Tudo blend of striking, grappling, and counters. Lau and Pai represent their different schools of Kung Fu, with Lion tagging along behind and employing a uniquely quick set of striking techniques. And then there's Lei-Fei, who seems to be what happens when Shun gets taken seriously. He has a similar suite of complex stance-switching techniques,

but is much more straightforward and powerful rather than focused on evasion and misdirection.

The amount of variety for toe-to-toe fighting is the best the series has ever seen, even if we do have to bid a fond farewell to Taka. As mentioned before, the training mode takes real effort to master, and even the extensive command mode doesn't cover all the different ways in which attacks can be linked, buffered, and otherwise strung together. It's even missing some basic moves, like Lion's ridiculously large selection of rising kicks. Each character has several different strategies available, according to both personal preference and the opponent immediately at hand. You can't attack a skilled Aoi or Wolf character with strikes because of their countering abilities, but trading is the only option against Lion or Jeffry. A lateral attack works well against a straightforward fighter like Akira, but falls down completely when Shun and Kage start bouncing all over the ring. More examples could fill plenty of space, but they would all serve to support the same point: a dedicated fighter will not get bored too soon with this game.

If the infighting game is more complex than it has ever been, though, evasion at medium and long distances has been tightened up a bit. The reasoning behind this is understandable, though – *Virtua Fighter 3*'s Evade button was the first to make movement in all directions a vital component of a 3D fighting game, but it also lent itself to abuse, with inexperienced players employing a stalling game built around continuous random movement. Certainly, that did a nice job of showing off the stage graphics, but it wasn't that much fun for players who wanted to dispense with the eye candy and mix it up. *Virtua Fighter 4* now uses more familiar movement controls, with a sidestep ►





and an 8-way run system similar to *Soul Calibur*, along with unique evade moves for certain characters. While every character can use 3D movement, this movement system places more complex evasion in the hands of characters whose style it suits. Aoi, Kage, and Shun in particular, have a lot of unusual dodge moves to complement the usual sidestepping.

Aside from the big changes to the evasion system, there are a host of small tweaks to other aspects of the game. We're back to the old square arenas of *Virtua Fighter 2*, but ring-outs have been heavily deemphasized. There's more space in all arenas, and the walls that encircle them have to be broken *Fighting Vipers*-style before a character can fall out. Jumping is toned down nicely, with gravity exerting its proper pull, and it's easy enough to differentiate the commands between a hop and a sidestep away from the camera.

The effect, all things taken as a whole, is something like a faster, more complex game that retains the essential character of *Virtua Fighter 2*. VF4 has that same grounded, down-to-earth feeling, but with a quicker pace and a much wider variety of moves. The methodical, counter-punchy nature of the older games isn't so evident, and the changes in the arenas take away some of the heavy pressure elements as well. To put it succinctly, there's less dancing around, less waiting for the attack to arrive, less worrying about where the edge of the stage is, and more pure fighting.

And is there more to do than just one-on-one fighting? Boy, is there ever. *Virtua Fighter 4* comes home with a host of new game modes – a huge addition in comparison to the relatively lean console conversions of earlier games in the series. For beginners, there's a superior training mode, with command tutorials, free sparring, and a trial mode that presents various problems to solve. There are 26 different lessons, each teaching a different strategy from basics on striking and grappling up to more

“

The amount of variety for toe-to-toe fighting is the best the series has ever seen.

”



complex defenses against particular types of attacks. It's probably a better training scheme than has yet been included in a fighting game, and it's the first to be kind enough to edit command directions to reflect a character's facing, but that's just a small addition in comparison to the AI and Kumite modes.

Kumite mode is how AM2 managed to integrate some of the features of the VF.NET arcade service into ►

Virtua Fighter 4

the home version of VF4. In case you missed the coverage of that network earlier on, players of the arcade version could pick up a special identity card that would record their fight records and save the acquisition of special character accessories. Being able to show off your own wins was cool, but accessorizing a fighter with special hidden gear? Much cooler. Obviously, this doesn't work in the as-yet-non-wired PS2 world at present, but Kumite mode is the next-best thing to continuous arcade competition. Like a survival mode, it pits you against an ongoing wave of opponents, but they're all personalized with accessories, different color palettes, and their own ring names and records. Some are tough, some are pushovers, and others are just quirky with their own style of fighting, but they all offer experience to your created fighter, who moves forward to higher levels of competition and gathers more character items. It's a great incentive to play the single-player game, especially as the opponents grow genuinely tougher, and it's an enhancement to competitive play as well, since it's fun to show off your record and accessories to friends.

The amount of data kept in Kumite is remarkable – more than just wins and losses, it records every bit of data down to which attacks land, which attacks are blocked, and how your performance develops over a



series of fights. After 10 fights with a single character, these statistics are displayed along with a series of comments on different aspects of performance. If you strike well at a certain altitude, or need to broaden your range of attacks, it will say so. Not using throws enough? The CPU will notice and advise you to adjust your strategy. It even gauges your mobility, how well you use the 3D movement options available and recommends maneuvers you're not using. Between the data keeping and the training mode, VF4 does more than any other fighting game to help you become a better player.

AI System is a good deal different and is probably much less accessible, but it's an interesting idea – instead of collecting and training Pokemon, would you like to collect and train Virtua Fighters? AI System allows you to create a computer-controlled fighter and teach it moves by performing them yourself in a sparring mode. You then pit your fighter against another AI fighter. It's a peculiar thing to have even bothered to program, but for those of the appropriate temperament it might prove unusually addictive. Even if the achievement isn't directly your own, it's a neat feeling to watch an AI fighter actually win a match with the techniques you taught it.

This is an awfully long way to go without mentioning how the game looks. Looks? Oh, yes, there are graphics here, aren't there? Get deep enough into the Virtua Fighter trance and visual details become meaningless, as will be concentrated purely on the precision and timing of attacks. As we all knew one way or the other, VF4 on PlayStation 2 isn't quite as good-looking as the NAOMI 2 original, as it's plagued by the usual demon: aliasing. It seems to be the price one pays for a top-notch framerate these days, and ▶





even if the edges don't look quite perfect, the models and textures are otherwise state of the art on PS2.

The faces are what you want to look at here, more than anything. The eyes are frightfully real, which was probably a much more difficult task of texturing and lighting than it might seem, and the expressions around them convey real emotion. The look of disdain on Wolf's face is utterly priceless, just barely ahead of the hilarious hate on Jeffry's face before he knocks the "camera" over in his stage intro. And yes, Lau looks old, but he looks old in that "shut up, ankle-biter, 'cuz I can still beat you stupid and make you say 'thank-you'" kind of way.

Of course, all that only shows up in the close-ups. In long shots, it's the stage graphics that stand out, which we never thought would have held up on PS2. AM2 has beaten expectations with the background graphics here, especially in brilliant arenas like the city rooftops and Greek ruins. The helicopter spotlights in the city are nothing short of amazing, creating perfect highlights and shadows on the fighters below. The weird Plasto-Sheen from the early test versions is long gone, largely replaced by realistic, muted reflections. Other levels impress with realtime ground surfaces. Sand and snow are kicked out of the way, flying away in puffs and leaving smooth trails where the action has passed, while stone tile floors crack and smash under the impact of throws. It's hard to overstate how good the realtime stage elements are. The polygon deformation and particle effects combine to create a great accent to a hard hit.

And it perhaps goes without saying, but just for the fun of it, we'll mention that *Virtua Fighter 4* raises the bar for character animation in a fighting game. The original *Virtua Fighter* was one of the very first games to do realistic human animation in 3D, and the tradition thus started continues three games later. All the familiar characters have their old suites of moves and more, while Lei-Fei and Vanessa hold up the series' standard with their new styles. Vanessa may not have

“ Instead of collecting and training Pokémon, would you like to collect and train Virtua Fighters? ”



the flash of her fellow newcomer's Shaolin style, but her mix of kickboxing and grappling moves has the harsh impact of real Vale Tudo. The clothing animation provides too many examples of excellent work to recount, with only a few small problems of collision detection intruding.

Of course, for some people it will all come back to the aliasing. To be honest, we hardly notice it any ▶

Virtua Fighter 4

more in the face of all the game's other good points (especially once we discovered the wealth of alternate player skins in Kumite mode), but some people can't help but get hung up on flaws like that. Too bad. If you can forgive that, this is one of the PS2's best-looking games. And the soundtrack cranks beautifully, with a mix of electronic tunes and pounding metal – since you wouldn't want anyone to forget that Yu Suzuki is in charge.

The new era of fighting has officially begun, then. This summer is when things really get interesting, with *Tekken 4* a definite and *Soul Calibur II* likely on the way not long after. But Sega's head start is just one of many reasons you should get cracking on *Virtua Fighter 4*. Irrelevant though our opinion might be in the eyes of the fighting fiends who really get it – sorry about our inability to gauge character comparisons in perfect detail, or analyze the counter-grappling system for a few hundred words, but it just ain't in our blood – we've had a good time with *VF4*, and we're going to have some more as soon as we can. – **David Smith** ■

RATINGS ::

PRESENTATION

9.2

GRAPHICS

9.0

PLAYABILITY

9.5

SOUND

8.0

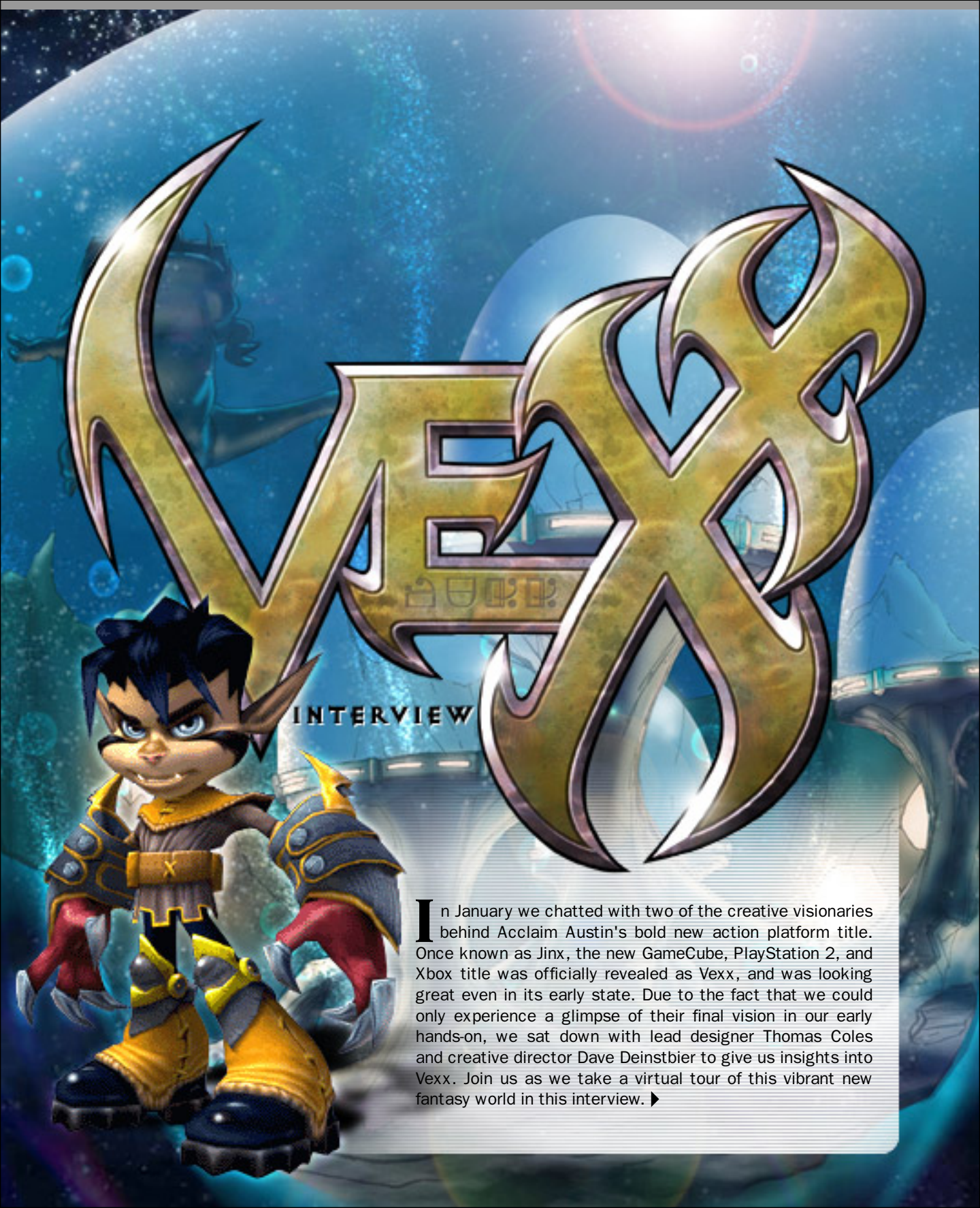
LASTING APPEAL

9.5

OVERALL ::

9.3



**INTERVIEW**

In January we chatted with two of the creative visionaries behind Acclaim Austin's bold new action platform title. Once known as Jinx, the new GameCube, PlayStation 2, and Xbox title was officially revealed as Vexx, and was looking great even in its early state. Due to the fact that we could only experience a glimpse of their final vision in our early hands-on, we sat down with lead designer Thomas Coles and creative director Dave Deinstbier to give us insights into Vexx. Join us as we take a virtual tour of this vibrant new fantasy world in this interview. ►

**IGN: Where did the idea for Vexx begin?**

Thomas Coles: That one is really interesting, because when we first started doing this we had to submit ideas across the company. We were looking for a character that Acclaim would be proud to have as their own brand. And we submitted a bunch of stuff, but the trick is -- and I'm sure it's something you've seen in the past -- Mario is not a great character because he's Mario and he's designed out of nowhere. He's Mario because of the games he's been in and people have grown to love him. And, that happens across the board. You've seen it happen with Crash, for example. You show somebody Crash and they're not going to go, "Wow, I want to be that guy." But, when you play Crash you say, "Wow, that's a great game. I really like Crash a lot."

It's a hard thing to do a design brief and capture the essence of a character and make everybody think, "This is the character I want to play." So, after having done this first art pass we realized: don't make a mascot. You don't make the brand that way. What we have to do from the product development side is make a great game. So, we stepped away from all of that. We went away from the office for a week. All we did was ask ourselves questions, and some of those questions were a little odd: should the game be 2D or should the game be 3D? I mean, who knows, maybe there's going to be a renaissance in 2D gaming. As hardcore gamers we all enjoy 2D games, but in the mass market that's not likely to be the case. Not with the consoles getting more and more powerful. So, that was a question very easy to answer. It should be 3D. Then we asked if it will be path-based, or are you free to move around? So, we spent a week doing nothing but answering questions without tying ourselves to the constraint of what the character is. We knew that we wanted the move set to not be based on a single simple gimmick, because then the character kind of becomes one dimensional. So we wanted to come up with a balanced move set. It's like a language that the character uses to talk to the game. So we came up with a basic moves set, things we wanted to do.

Once we had that. Once we knew what we wanted our character to do. We actually took about a month or month and a half to analyze just about every game we could get our hands on. It wasn't for the purpose to copy exactly what they did. It was figuring out what it was

about the fundamental nature of the moves that felt so good. Because if we could distill that down, then we could start thinking how we could make it work for us. I think I mentioned to you earlier about the whole notion of a double jump in a game. You put a double jump in a game. It's a fun move to execute, but it breaks a lot of the tension of the platforming. You know, I come running up, I throw myself off a ledge and I simply steer myself around and hit the jump button again. It's a fun thing and has a great rhythm. I personally like it. But by the same token it breaks the tension of the platforming. It isn't like in the old Mario game where maybe I have to get myself lined up just right. So that's a good example of where we were headed with the move set and how we analyzed things.

So the character was born out of that (to get back to your question). We built what we wanted the character to do. ►





INTERVIEW

We didn't have *the* character for about the first eight months because we were busy evolving this proxy to do the things we wanted him to do for gameplay purposes. Then we went through focus testing and what not because it's easy to fit a shell on him. And it worked really well. Vexx's gauntlets are perfect for applying effects to give us the move set that we determined that we wanted.

I'd rather be limited by choices we made on the design end than the art end. You know... Is he – well, I don't even want to make up a name of a character because I might name a real guy, but...

Dave Dienstbier: Eh, say Billy the Badger.

Thomas: Okay. So, what does Billy the Badger do? Well he does badger-like things. So now your design team is immediately in the rut of thinking, "Oh a badger wouldn't do that." We need the flexibility to create a balanced fun game first before we're starting to cut out possibilities. And it does make it harder. We've had hundreds of character drawings.



Dave: It was pretty impressive how many drawings got generated. But it was the right thing to do, especially for this sort of game.

Quite honestly, for any sort of game. We just did functional decisions. That's what the team decided was important and that's what we all agreed should be

the thrust. I wouldn't say we did a single thing wrong in that regard.

Thomas: It's all about fun factor. One of the things we found really interesting about the game is that we would think, "Oh, it'd be neat to put this here or this here." And you'd say, "You can't do that. It doesn't make sense." Then you look at games like Mario, which were at complete liberty just to do whatever they wanted to make it fun. What we found as American developers was that we had a really tough time letting go of context. You know, you want to explain everything.

Dave: You're Canadian, buddy.

[Everyone laughs]

Thomas: We had to give ourselves that license to do things that don't make sense. We want to make a game that is fun.

IGN: How many people are on the Vexx team?

Thomas: I believe the number is around 32. That's the base team. We're hiring a couple of extra people and there's the spillover from the Turok side. We don't usually count them as part of our team for budget purposes, but we're sharing so much technology with them. You know, there's no point in writing two renderers, two polygon compiles, etc. You do all that at once. So by shuffling those tasks around we get extra programmers – there are 7 or 8 of them there. So, all told I think it's fair to say the team size is about 40.

Dave: We share a lot of resources. The two projects that you're seeing are huge projects with 30-month ▶



INTERVIEW

development times each. With 35 people per game working on them. You have to put that in the context of where our company was a year to year and a half ago. Think about the risk – the commitment on a corporate level they've made to these games being great. Do you think it's all been smiles and sunshine? No, people get nervous. They start wondering times, gosh I hope this is the right thing to do. But, they've stood behind us. We've told them again and again...

Thomas: Imagine the fear when we've actually reengineered our process. When [marketing and investors] are looking at it we're showing them untextured, flat polygons.

IGN: Because Turok and Vexx share technology, do you think gamers will be able to see the kinship?

Dave: I don't think you'll be able to sense a real connection other than they'll both be beautiful. They are such opposites. A lot of times you'll see an engine developed and you can immediately say, "That was done on that engine." That's usually indicative of the way it deals with geometry construction and what constraints it has. Also, the way that the art teams are so vastly different on Vexx and Turok, I can't imagine anyone would unknowingly recognize them as the same engine.

IGN: Tell us a little bit more about Vexx. You've compared it to platformers out there, but would you describe it as such? What type of game is it?

Thomas: It's heavily exploration based. I do think it has a unique take on it. You could make the argument that Zelda is a platformer. But, I mean...okay it's got some elements of that, but it also has the RPG fighting elements. We wanted to make a next-generation exploration game. So that begs a whole bunch of questions. Is it that platforms move differently? That aspect of the game is relatively fixed. So what we focused on instead is the unique situations we can get the player in

– mini-game style stuff you can get the character in. That still doesn't address the notion of the player standing in the world wondering what he's doing. Because, a lot of the games in the past revolve around sitting in the middle of a field and you're trying to get somewhere else. The next-generation consoles allows to create a higher density of things to do – more characters to fight, more animations, special effects, all those things.

Our take on it was that the direction we wanted to go in because it was an exploration based game is to focus on two halves of the player's brain. What am I doing in the here and now? I'm fighting, jumping, over there I'm strategizing. Where am I going? What problem am I solving? What are my tasks? We're trying to find that nice balance.

IGN: Can you give us specific examples of what Vexx does in his world?

Thomas: There is one case, even if the first level – I can give that away – where the character finds out there is a ►





INTERVIEW

hidden level beneath the world. He first gets in and we're trying to keep the space nice and tiny for him to ease him into the world. He goes down into the Neverglades below and there's this temple. And painted across the walls of this temple is this mural – kind of a history of what happened with the people. So you see this depiction. There's some things the players may not realize. He's looking at it and there's pick-ups in that painting. Right, so he runs up and starts banging on the wall or whatever, feeling around trying to get at them. Then he finds out after playing around a little bit that there is a portal that actually allows him to enter the wall. And he's actually rendered to the texture there. So this 3D character is in a 2D space and is wrapping around the walls of this chamber. He's platforming like he's in a 2D style platformer. Now when I talk about the uniqueness of the different tasks that's what I'm talking about. We have our share of classic mini-games, but there's so much unique content that's never been seen and that's a huge challenge for us.

It was all about how we tempo the game. We do some exploration into a fighting sequence into a problem solving bit, so we're mixing up and giving you all of those



experiences at the same time. So that's what you'll see is that all of that exists. But it's paced to allow you to experience highs and lows.

IGN: The level you described. Is that something you have to do, or do you just stumble upon it and have a choice?

Thomas: You're running through the texture map collecting pick-ups. The player is put in an interesting mental state. At first he's confused. You know the chamber isn't just there for nothing and you can see the pick-ups there. They look just like the ones in the real world but you go up and look and it's flat. So you ask how you figure out what you have to do. All of the older games when we were younger didn't spoon feed everything to you. They weren't so cryptic and obscure as to become painful, but it was like here's a problem and you're on the edge of figuring out how it works.

IGN: What can we look forward to as to boss fights?

Thomas: There are six bosses in the game. Three of whom are mini-bosses who you revisit. One of the things we wanted to do there is build a relationship with them.

IGN: Tell us about the technology. You mentioned you have a unique lighting model. It looks radiosity based.

Thomas: Sure. We talked about this a while back. What's next-generation mean? Is it more polygons? Is it more textures? There's a limit to that. A 2,000 polygon character can look as good as a 10,000 polygon character. As long as he's designed well, textured well, and lit well. So we wanted to focus on lighting as being a major direction we approached our renderer and the stylistic look of the game. So he – from scratch – created an entire radiosity- based rendering system. Before, we used to kind of fudge it. But, fudging it never gave you that super realistic result you're looking for. And we thought it ►



INTERVIEW

would be really interesting to take a surreal game like Vexx, and you look at it and your mind is telling you this is all wrong. It's all fantasy and it's all unique and surreal, but all of the physical look of it is making you think it's lit right and textured right, reflecting, etc. to play with your head a little bit. We do like the kind of colored hyper-realism that we get, the saturated look from radiosity.

IGN: The shadowing is also very interesting. You'll see platforms moving, casting shadows on not only the other world geometry, but also on Vexx himself. Can you tell us about how that works?

Thomas: That one is super secret. [laughs] I don't want to give too much away. We have a Ph.D. that it took three months to figure out that specific feature. That's really super proprietary. We don't even like to talk about what we're doing at all.

Dave: [Jokingly] There's actually no lighting in the game.

IGN: How is dialogue being handled? Will Vexx talk?

Thomas: We're trying to minimize the talking. As part of the storytelling we've found that we needed to have him say a little bit. The classic Nintendo approach is that the main characters don't speak. Outside of vocalizations he mostly instigates talks. He'll respond briefly to talks, but since he's your avatar in the world -- what does he feel? He feels whatever you feel because you're playing him. So if he's off sobbing in a corner, what's he doing for the player? You may get a disconnect with your player if he's not portraying your avatar. One of the things we tried to do is keep that very clean.

Dave: Why do you want your character going, "Awww! Man, I can't believe I did that!" When you know the player could be thinking the same thing. Then he starts babbling on and what if you don't like the voice we picked? You risk annoying the player.

IGN: How will Vexx's personality come out? Is there going to be idle animations? What kind of guy is Vexx?

Thomas: He won't be too happy-go-lucky. Some things are established during the opening cinema. He's quite volatile. When Yabu sweeps in Vexx kind of loses it and goes to take them all on by himself. It's a very youthful, impetuous thing to do. The humor of it is the next shot you kind of see him clapped in chains. Of course, he didn't have his gauntlets yet. So, one thing leads to another and his grandfather is killed because he's rash and he made a mistake. Everything goes downhill from there.

Dave: [Jokingly] Yea, he starts drinking. Next thing you know he's in Vegas every weekend.

[Everyone laughs]

Dave: He's brash. Not necessarily very patient. Easily frustrated when he's emotional about something, but also a brave. He's a little badass. ▶





IGN: Because this is a multiplatform title for GameCube, Xbox, and PlayStation 2, how are you going to take advantage of each system?

Thomas: One thing that is very interesting is the controllers are very different – how you hold them and how you play with them. So that creates an interesting dynamic from system to system. We account for that and make it consistent from platform to platform. All we can say is that all three of those machines are very, very fast more than capable of running Vexx at 60 frames per second. If you ask whether one thing will have something the other doesn't... Not really. It may be that the PS2 has a particular feature we decide to turn on just like the Xbox may, but they're going to be the same game.

IGN: You mentioned it's going to have surround sound. What are you guys exploring for that?

Thomas/Dave: They're fishing. There may be some slight differences in the way the audio works from one system to another, but suffice it to say we have all the equipment we need to encode 3D sound.

IGN: What kind of progress do you hope to make by E3 in terms of visuals and gameplay?

Thomas: Let's put it this way. The lighting that you saw is first-pass lighting. The shadowing effects – first-pass. Textures – they've put a great deal of work into it, but still haven't gone through the sort of unification pass. What you saw will be dramatically cleaner. It will also be running a lot more enemies, pick-ups. You'll see Rex the castle keepers giant dog patrolling the area.

Dave: I don't know why you call him a dog, he doesn't look like a dog.

Thomas: Okay, he's the equivalent. He's the watchdog. You don't want to be on the floor around him. He's a big lumbering guy that comes after you, so it's a mad scramble to get to one of the floor registers and jump into the updraft to float back up out of reach. All the while he's jumping up after you trying to get to you.

IGN: The currently released screens. Are they from this early version without all these additional passes?

Dave: Yes, they're still early. It will look a lot better by E3. You'll also have the reactive AI elements in there to some of the combat stuff...

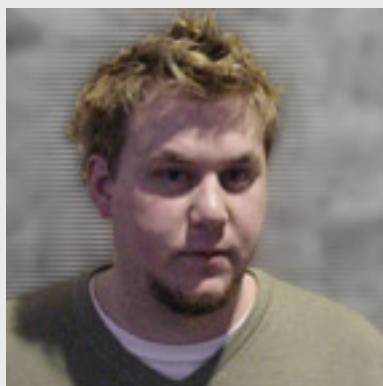
Thomas: More particle stuff. Remember there's no proper water in there yet at all.

IGN: What's the target release date?

Dave: I'd say holiday 2002. You have to understand when you commit to three platforms, you know, you really need to get all three versions of those game out within the same window or you'll lose the momentum of the game. Who's excited about a game that takes six to eight months to come to another platform? It's not new anymore.

IGN: Excellent. Vexx is looking great and we can't wait to see it at E3. Thank you for your time.





Matt Casamassina

This Month in GameCube ::

Well, well – you're back. The last couple of weeks have been somewhat slow going for our lovely next-generation console of choice, but things are about to pick up quite nicely. By the time this issue of Unplugged hits, Capcom's GameCube update of *Resident Evil* will be ready to debut in Japan, and indeed US gamers will have barely more than a month to go before it releases stateside. Excited?

During the same period America will see such GameCube releases as *Bloody Roar* – not a bad fighter, I might add; *Soccer Slam*, *Home Run King* and a polished port of James Bond 007 in...*Agent Under Fire*.

This, of course, is just the beginning. The months to follow will debut such triple-A GameCube products as *Spider-Man The Movie*, *Star Fox Adventures*, *Eternal Darkness*, and more. So in dedication of things to come, we bring you three new previews of upcoming software currently in the works. Sit back, have a Coke and enjoy.

For more Cube news, reviews, previews, and more, visit <http://cube.ign.com>.



Featured Preview ::

022 :: Red Card Soccer

Also In This Issue ::

023 :: Preview: Skies of Arcadia

024 :: Preview: Dead to Rights



Preview :: Skies of Arcadia

Become the Robin Hood of the skies with one of the first true RPGs on GameCube.



Preview :: Dead to Rights

Move over Max Payne – Namco's noir thriller is set to blow gamers away.

Editor's Most Wanted ::

- 1 :: Metroid
- 2 :: Mario Sunshine
- 3 :: Zelda
- 4 :: Eternal Darkness
- 5 :: Star Fox Adventures

Office Abuse ::

Matt Casamassina gets to park in the handicapped spot for several mental-related reasons.



GameCube :: Preview

RED CARD SOCCER

Midway Blitzes the most popular sport in the world. Are you ready?

Midway's *NFL Blitz* franchise has been providing gamers with a combination of real NFL teams, players, and stadiums and a decidedly more brutal play style than any other game on the market. The franchise has been successful since day one, so it should really come as no surprise that the company has decided to expand its reach into different sports. The latest expansion is *Red Card Soccer*, a fully Blitzed take on the world's most popular sport – but with the option to go the simulation route.

Red Card Soccer, ported to GameCube by Point of View Software, serves up 32 licensed soccer teams from around the globe and features real players and stadiums too. The title's gameplay mechanics lean toward the arcade side of the fence, and indeed players can expect some truly fast action, bone crunching hits, kicks and even slams, but there is quite an unexpected twist: the referees normally turn a blind eye to what's going on, but players can turn up their alertness so that *Red Card Soccer* plays less like a Blitzed version of the sport and more like the real deal.

Gameplay modes include Friendly, Tournament, and Cup – all self-explanatory. There is also support for up to four players at once, which makes this the perfect choice for those of us with actual friends – what a concept.

Visually, *Red Card Soccer* is somewhat of a mixed bag. The title boasts huge, sprawling fields and nicely modeled stadiums. It also features fluidly animated stars, some decent shadow and light work, and all with a surprisingly good framerate. But on the other hand, the geometry being pushed isn't overwhelming; player models lack some detail, and the background crowds – like so many games of this type – could use some serious work.



However, just being able to see players flip in mid-air, crash into one another with brutal force, and slam the ball at a level of power that can only be described as arcade-like surely makes up for any visual shortcomings. There is a certain satisfaction in Midway's Blitz-style gameplay mechanics that must be acknowledged whether one enjoys these types of games or not.

The GameCube version of *Red Card Soccer* will be a direct port of the PlayStation 2 original with possible marginal graphic enhancements. Given the time frame Midway wants this released in, though – late June – we aren't expecting any major mechanical overhauls. Still, given that the Sony version is already quite a lot of fun, we're not exactly complaining. – **Matt Casamassina** ■



Details ::

Publisher :: Midway

Developer :: Midway / Point of View

Genre :: Sports

of Players :: 4

Release Date :: June 30, 2002



GameCube :: Preview

SKIES OF ARCADIA

Become the Robin Hood of the skies with one of the first true RPGs on GameCube

Maybe you bought a GameCube for *Rogue Leader*. Maybe you bought a GameCube for *Super Smash Bros. Melee*. Maybe you don't even own a GameCube yet because you love RPGs and have little to no reason to purchase the system in light of this. Regardless, it's no secret; the GCN is lacking role-playing software. Thanks to Sega, though, we won't have to wait much longer for a faithful role-playing game on a Nintendo home console. Currently, *Skies of Arcadia*, the acclaimed Dreamcast RPG, is being ported to the Nintendo GameCube.

Originally created by Overworks and produced by one of the members from the *Phantasy Star Online* team, *Skies of Arcadia* has an imaginative storyline and compelling gameplay in a fully 3D world. The story is inspired by the old fable of Robin Hood, but it's set in an advanced, sky-based world called Arcadia. Continents float on seas of air, and voyages are carried out via airships, the perfect RPG travel vessel. However, with all this skybound sailing comes the advent of Sky Pirates, too. In *Skies of Arcadia*, there are actually two types of pirates: Black Sky Pirates and Blue Rogues. The difference between the two is that Black Sky Pirates are completely ruthless, attacking any and all ships it feels it can overtake, while the Blue Rogues only steal from the rich and give to the poor. Queue Robin Hood of Arcadia. That's you. Well, sort of. You are a proud (and cocky) member of the Blue Rogues, a group that takes it upon themselves to steal for the good of their people. The gameplay itself unfolds quite nicely around this premise, opening the door for lots of confrontations.

Skies of Arcadia opens with a sequence of battles and lots of flare, which will grab you immediately. Of course, as with most RPGs, you start off very weak and must walk a long road in order to seek vengeance on a character you meet early on. At its heart, *Skies of Arcadia* doesn't do anything that other RPGs haven't done. It's a turn-based role-playing experience, but it offers up plenty of polish. The magic system relies on colored moonstones, which carry attributes and spells with them. There are a total of six stones, and each stone must be mastered. As you gain experience you learn to use the power of the stones more wisely. That is, you learn new spells and attacks. The great part about *Skies of Arcadia*, though, is that you actually fly the airship. You will navigate through these skies, sailing to different parts of the world. Even better, you will take part in ship-to-ship battles, firing your cannons, and pillaging other vessels, with any luck.

This RPG offering is shaping up to be one of the more important ports for the GameCube, even if it is based on an aging Dreamcast title. It features a stunning soundtrack and rich graphics that would look great running at 60 frames per second on GameCube. Look for it before the end of 2002 with a possible link up to the Game Boy Advance for side quests. — **Fran Mirabella** ■



Details ::

Publisher :: Sega

Developer :: Overworks

Genre :: RPG

of Players :: 1

Release Date :: TBA 2002



GameCube :: Preview

DEAD TO RIGHTS

Move over Max Payne – Namco's noir thriller is set to blow gamers away.

Meet Jack Slate. He's a cop – one of the good ones, but he's having a very bad day. Some mysterious thug has murdered his father, and worst of all, he's been framed for the job. Now it's up to Slate to set the record straight with a whole lot of guns, fights, and all around ass kicking. Are you up for the task?

Dead to Rights, developed by Namco USA out of San Jose, California, is one hell of an ambitious action-shooter. It's got a style borrowed directly from Hollywood's film noir detective movies, a compelling storyline authored by one of tinsel town's screenwriters, and "bullet time" – the slow-motion effect made incredibly popular in movies like *The Matrix*. All of this comes together for an experience that is fast and cinematic.

Slate explores the city in search of his father's killer, all the while avoiding – or fighting, as it were, the law which unfairly seeks to imprison him. He also encounters loads of no-good low lives hoping to put a bullet in him, but he's not about to let that happen. This guy's armed with everything from shotguns to clubs, and he isn't afraid to use them. He can target enemies and blow them away, but he can also zoom in on specific areas of objects and foes for super-precise destruction and kills.

What's more, though, is that the slow-motion bullet-time effects are much more than a gimmick. In *Dead to Rights*, this is something that's woven into the gameplay experience. Slate can dive forward, left, right, or diagonally, and with the press of a button the action will slow down considerably. In mid-air, the cop can target enemies and blow them away, only to land, roll, and do it all again. It all looks amazingly cinematic. Furthermore, the motion will slow even more drastically – almost to a stand still – depending on how long the button is pressed.



This is a feature that was fully used in the Xbox and PS2 releases of *Max Payne*, but Namco hopes that its more action-oriented feel and arcade-pace will prove more polished.

Beyond the motion effects there are some seriously deep game mechanics in place. Slate can dive behind objects to use them for cover and, as if that's not satisfying enough, he can also take enemies hostage and use them as shields. The main character can even steal weapons from foes. For instance, the detective can walk up to a thug with a shotgun, grab it, flip it around and shoot the poor guy. It's a nasty business.

Visually speaking, *Dead to Rights* looks very promising. Stylized 3D areas range from underground parking garages to the insides of a disco hall and all the way down to the slums of a city neighborhood. The character animation is fluid and the slow motion effects are downright mesmerizing.

Microsoft has shelled out the cash to make *Dead to Rights* a temporary Xbox exclusive, but Namco is already well underway with GameCube and PS2 versions. Expect this one on Nintendo's console before the end of the year.

– **Matt Casamassina** ■

Details ::

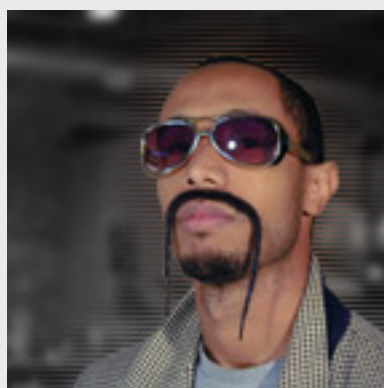
Publisher :: Namco

Developer :: Namco

Genre :: Action

of Players :: 1

Release Date :: November 2002



Aaron Boulding

This Month in Xbox ::

The excitement for the Xbox is building in every corner of the video-game world. Publishing companies, developers, retailers and, most importantly, the fans are slowly but surely becoming stone cold believers in Microsoft's hulking green machine. All it took was a run of quality titles here in early 2002, and next thing you know everybody is all about Xbox. *Jet Set Radio Future*, *Rallisport Challenge*, *Wreckless*, and even excellent ports of *NBA 2K2* and *Tony Hawk 3* fattened up the Xbox library quite nicely, and just in time for the pre-E3 lull. For all of us here at IGN and even for you Xbox owners out there, early spring is going to be more about anticipation (handfuls of first party titles will be announced) than direct Xbox stimulation (there's not much after *GUNVALKYRIE* and *Spider-Man*).

But for now, enjoy our in-depth look at the characters of *Hunter: The Reckoning* because this game is going to be a huge blip on your radar before you know it. Take the spookiness of *Resident Evil* and the all out multiplayer fun of a "posse" game like *Gauntlet* and you've got a game worthy of the Xbox. Also, check out our sneak previews of the next *Mortal Kombat* title, *MK Deadly Alliance* and Codemasters' interesting third person title, *Prisoner of War*.

For more Xbox news, reviews, previews, and more, visit:
<http://xbox.ign.com>.



Featured Preview ::

026 :: Hunter: The Reckoning

Also In This Issue ::

028 :: Preview: Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance

029 :: Preview: Prisoner of War



Preview: Mortal Kombat: DA

The fatality-infused fighting game franchise is set to make its glorious comeback.



Preview: Prisoner of War

Codemasters' Prisoner of War looks to combine the best of The Great Escape and Hogan's Heroes.

Editor's Most Wanted ::

- 1 :: Project Ego
- 2 :: Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic
- 3 :: Pro Race Drive
- 4 :: Yager
- 5 :: Any open-ended space pirate/bounty hunter type game.

Office Abuse ::

Aaron firmly believes that Lando saved the universe and everyone's in denial.



Xbox :: Preview

HUNTER: THE RECKONING

We take a look at the characters you will be playing in this awesome game.

Creatures of the night, beware. Zombies, vampires, werewolves, ghouls – notice has been served. A reckoning is coming. This summer the undead meet their maker. *Hunter: The Reckoning* takes the *Gauntlet*-formula to the next level. Featuring furious four-play action, the screen will be filled with baddies and blood. We'll be taking a look at different aspects of this game as it nears its release. First up, the characters of *Hunter: The Reckoning*.

Each character begins with a melee weapon and a ranged weapon with unlimited ammunition. Throughout the game, characters can find new weapons such as chain-saws, shotguns, machine guns, and even flamethrowers – burn baby, burn. Characters also have "edges" which are like magical attacks. These differ between the characters, and new ones can be gained throughout the game.

Each player is rated by five stats. At the start of the game, these stats are low, but they can be raised through superior gameplay. Here are the stats and what they mean:

Strength - Measures the power of your attack

Accuracy - How accurate you are with ranged weapons

Speed - How quick and nimble you are on your feet.

Conviction - Your edge draws from your conviction.

The higher the conviction, the more edge you can use.

Stamina - These are your hit points. The better the rating, the harder you are to kill.



Deuce Wyatt: Avenger

Strength: **3**

Accuracy: **2**

Speed: **1**

Conviction: **1**

Stamina: **2**

Starting weapons:

Axe, rifle

Deuce is one baaaaad mothah. His giant axe is a zombie cleaver, and with the use of the "edge," the axe becomes a fiery weapon. Deuce is the fighter, there to kick ass and chew bubblegum, and you know this guy is all out of bubble gum.



Samantha Alexander: Defender

Strength: **2.5**

Accuracy: **3**

Speed: **3**

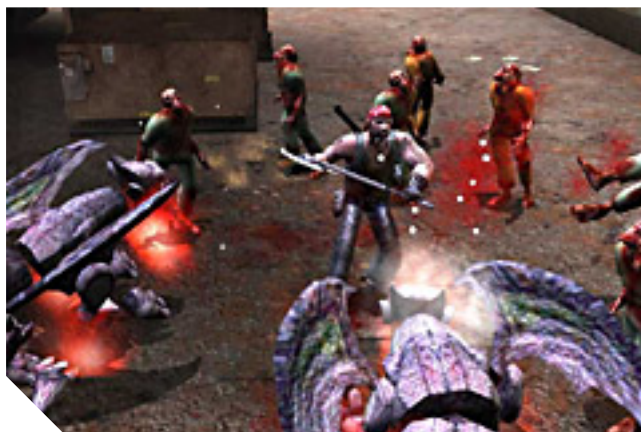
Conviction: **2.5**

Stamina: **2**

Starting weapons:

Katana, revolver

This beauty is the most balanced at the start of the game. She's a cop, and she swings her katana with deadly precision. Her revolver isn't that powerful, so you'll want to pick up the shotgun as soon as possible. ►





Xbox :: Preview

HUNTER: THE RECKONING (cont.)

We take a look at the characters you will be playing in this awesome game.



Father Estaban Cortez: Judge

Strength: **2**

Accuracy: **2**

Speed: **2**

Conviction: **4**

Stamina: **2**

Starting weapons:

Cross-sword, crossbow

The preacher is about to put the smack down on evil. Father Estaban is a no holds barred man of the cloth. His crossbow is a little weak, but he more than makes up for it with his edge. In the world of *Gauntlet*, Estaban would be the magic-user.



Kassandra Cheyung: Martyr

Strength: **2**

Accuracy: **2**

Speed: **4**

Conviction: **3**

Stamina: **1.5**

Starting weapons:

Double daggers, double-fisted pistols

This raver must have a love of John Woo movies: she slashes at the undead with two daggers and fires away with double-fisted pistols. She's the fastest of the characters.



Details ::

Publisher :: Interplay

Developer :: High Voltage Software

Genre :: Action

of Players :: 4

Release Date :: TBA 2002

– Hilary Goldstein ❁



Xbox :: Preview

MORTAL KOMBAT: DEADLY ALLIANCE

The fatality-infused fighting game franchise is set to make its glorious comeback.

Just when you thought Scorpion and Subzero had kicked off into that big arcade cabinet in the sky, Midway is back in 2002 to hit you with *Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance*. The first fully functional MK game in three years, *Deadly Alliance* is being re-invented and re-designed to appeal to an entirely new generation of home console gamers.

It's still a fighter, and there's still going to be excessive violence, but on the Xbox we're expecting a whole new level of detailed gore. Tastes have changed, and politicians have other issues to focus on these days, so a little extra bloodiness with your *Mortal Kombat* shouldn't be too hard to imagine. Remember: the world was a different place back in 1992 when MK shocked everybody with its liberal use of blood and guts – we were all jumpin' around to House of Pain and actually loving Kevin Costner movies for crying out loud. Now, in the 00's, we know Everlast was a solo act all along and that Costner's been playing basically the same character for 20 years, so *Mortal Kombat* will have to up the ante in *Deadly Alliance* for gamers to be impressed all over again.

The *Deadly Alliance* in this game is the unholy duo of Shang Tsung and Quan Chi, the two main evil chaps from previous MK games. The *Mortal Kombat* tourney in *Deadly Alliance* will also see the return of classic characters like Subzero, Raiden, Scorpion, Jax, Sonya and Reptile; plus, a whole mess of new characters have yet to be revealed.

One of the most promising innovations in *MK: Deadly Alliance* is the character damage system. Midway promises that throughout the course of a fight characters will bruise, drip sweat and blood, and have their clothes ripped. *Dead or Alive 3* and *Virtua Fighter 4* have taken clothing in fighting games to all new heights, but to actually have clothes rip and interact with enemies is a great way to set a new standard in videogames. *Knockout Kings* on Xbox had real time bruising on the boxers and thin coats of sweat, but *Deadly Alliance* seems to be taking a different approach to their fluid effects with dripping sweat and blood.

This latest *Mortal Kombat* game looks to be a huge departure from earlier installments in the franchise, and this is good news for gamers. Time and some damn fine fighting games from Tecmo and Sega have done a lot to make people forget about the more recent *Mortal Kombat* tragedies (*Special Forces* anyone?), but the gaming world should be ready for Midway to re-establish the preeminence of one of their strongest franchises.

– Aaron Boulding ■



Details ::

Publisher :: Midway

Developer :: Midway

Genre :: Fighting

of Players :: 2

Release Date :: TBA 2002



Xbox :: Preview

PRISONER OF WAR

Codemasters' *Prisoner of War* looks to combine the best of *The Great Escape* and *Hogan's Heroes*.

Prisoner of War will be making a break for your favorite Microsoft console just in time for summer vacation, and it's not your typical 3D action adventure title. *POW* casts gamers in the role of Air Force officer Louis Stone, a secret agent type who has to infiltrate several German POW camps to find out what's really going on in those bastions of suffering. The major twist in this game is that you're not going on a Nazi-killing adventure as usual; you're simply trying to escape the POW camp using nothing but your wits and the nonlethal items a prisoner would have available to them.

Apparently the Nazis had no problem hiding their most treasured research and development facilities at POW camps knowing damn well the Allies wouldn't attack prisons full of Allied soldiers. You'll take control of four Allied Officers (British, French, Dutch, and US) across four German POW camps (Salonika, Stalag Luft I, Stalag Luft III, and Colditz Castle) over the course of the game, but your goal remains the same: Escape.

Like we said, it won't be a matter of simply finding the weapons rack in the prison and opening a can of tasty *rollmops* on the prison guards. Instead, you'll be doing plenty of sneaking around and using all kinds of objects for every stealth-related purpose, but there'll be no all-out combat. For example, rocks are valuable assets in the game because you can throw them against walls to distract guards away from your position.

In the PC version of the game, the prison simulation will be so accurate that you'll have to bribe other prisoners for information, tools, or any other sort of help you'll need. We can only assume the Xbox version of *POW* will contain similar elements. Chocolate has been mentioned as the main resource for getting what you want from other prisoners, and we agree that this is better than using cigarettes or salad tossing as "currency."

Each of the *POW* characters will be skilled in areas that will lend themselves to prison escaping, and you will be able to devise their escape plans. Explosives and an improvised glider are just two of the more advanced goodies you'll have available to you. No word on if Richard Dawson will be on hand to help you out while you're in the services of the German POW system.

Wide Games is the developer behind *Prisoner of War*, and they plan on delivering a whole new kind of adventure game to the consoles. Codemasters is the publisher, and in late spring, they'll have you sneaking and creeping like Steve McQueen or even like that uppity hen in *Chicken Run*. — Aaron Boulding ■



Details ::

Publisher :: Codemasters

Developer :: Wide Games

Genre :: Action - Adventure

of Players :: 1

Release Date :: Summer 2002



Douglass C. Perry

This Month in PlayStation 2 ::

So much for the first quarter being slow and peaceful. I just got through reviewing four games in one week, and that thing you call sleep? What is that? Still, sidestepping my weak complaints for the moment, the fact is that PS2 games continue to flow in, and after such a great holiday season it's hard to believe. With a great February, which included titles such as *Maximo: Ghosts to Glory* and *State of Emergency* to name a few, PS2 owners should be very happy.

But now it's spring, and the birds, bees, and baseballs are flying. Spring training has begun, and already almost all of the baseball games are on shelves. This year, PS2 owners can experience four baseball games if they so dare. *High Heat* and *All-Star Baseball* are the major contenders, while surprisingly *Triple Play* and *MLB* appear to be having an off year. And Sega? *World Series Baseball* has flown south to Xbox, exclusively. Bleh.

Still, it's best to concentrate on the good things – sports, games, and fun. That's what life is all about.

For PS2 news, reviews, previews and more visit <http://ps2.ign.com>.



Featured Preview ::

031 :: **Spyro: Enter the Dragonfly**

Also In This Issue ::

032 :: **Preview: Sky Gunner**

033 :: **Review: Smash Court Tennis Pro Tournament**



Preview: Sky Gunner

Yes, it's cute. How cute? Real cute. But it's also an excellent new take on flight shooting.



Review: Smash Court Tennis PT

Namco's pro tennis game goes through the motions but leaves you wanting more.

Editor's Most Wanted ::

- 1 :: Twisted Metal: Black Online
- 2 :: Virtua Fighter 4
- 3 :: TimeSplitters 2
- 4 :: Soul Calibur
- 5 :: Dead to Rights

Office Abuse ::

Who am I? "Don't touch that!
You'll ruin everything!"



PlayStation 2 :: Preview

SPYRO: ENTER THE DRAGONFLY

The loveable, affable Spyro roars into a new adventure on PS2 armed with new attacks and prepared to solve the riddle of the lost dragonflies.

After sitting in the producer spot for nearly five years now, Universal Interactive has become a full-fledged publisher with a litany of well-established titles to run with. The *Spyro the Dragon* series, once developed by Insomniac Studios, is now in the hands of Equinoxe (also working on *Aliens: Colonial Marines*), and ships to PS2 in Q4 2002.

Spyro: Enter the Dragonfly is the first next-generation Spyro game for PS2, and Universal plans to keep the core gameplay elements of the series fully intact. What that means is that Spyro will get the next-gen treatment in visuals, with prettier, larger, and more populated worlds, and it means that *Enter the Dragonfly* will expand on the notions that were inherent to *Spyro: Year of the Dragon*. Players will be adventuring out into the colorful fantasy worlds of the Spyro universe, porting to different lands, greeting a wide variety of odd and funny creatures, solving a slew of puzzles, and entering into a handful of mini-games.

In *Enter the Dragonfly*, Spyro discovers that the natural order of his world has been drastically altered. After completing his previous adventures, he is able to enjoy the Year of the Dragon Festival, but after it ends, and much to his dismay, the dragonflies have been stolen. For those who don't know, the beautiful and magical dragonflies in Spyro's world are the source of all the dragon's magic! So naturally, Spyro must venture out into the world and recapture all of the dragonflies to restore order in his land. Yes, it's a tall order, but little Spyro isn't as naive as he once was, and he's got considerable skills in his pocket after three adventures. In this new adventure, it sounds like Spyro will spend a reasonable amount of time flying, and hopefully he'll be able to stay in the air longer than in previous games.

This time around Spyro learns some new tricks that enable him to face new challenges with a larger variety of weapons. Along with blasting enemies using his standard dragon firepower, Spyro earns new breath abilities including ice, electricity, and the strange bubble-breathe attack used specifically for solving puzzles. What makes the extra attacks so eloquent is that Spyro apparently can switch between the attacks in realtime onscreen, rather than being restricted to only one attack at a time.

Going with the previous expansion of Spyro's skills and abilities, Universal looks to incorporate new vehicles to pilot as well as a slew of mini-games to compete in. All in all, Spyro shows excellent potential and it should please platform-adventure fans of all ages. — **Douglass C. Perry** ■



Details ::

Publisher :: Universal Studios

Developer :: Equinoxe

Genre :: Platform - Adventure

Number of Players :: 1

Release Date :: Winter 2002



PlayStation 2 :: Preview **SKY GUNNER**

Yes, it's cute. How cute? Real cute. But it's also an excellent new take on flight shooting.

PlayStation 2 fans need not necessarily fear *Sky Gunner* on account of an excess of cute. Sure, this is the most brain-bendingly kawaii game on the system, with giant eyes, broad smiles, SD mutations, and squeaky trebly voices in ridiculous abundance, but don't worry, it's a well-done shooter too. Indeed, the game is good enough at this point in its revision (it hit the market in Japan some time ago by way of SCE, and is undergoing some tweaking for American release through Atlus) to fly even without its personality to carry it. The charming characters are just icing on the cake for those of us who like that sort of thing, and perhaps only a minor annoyance for the rest of you.

But it would be hard not to get a kick out of the cast and crew of *Sky Gunner*, who cheerfully flit between the clouds over an utopian world where TWA never took flight out of the hands of folks like the Wright brothers. Our big-eyed heroes pilot kit-based prop-driven microlights, using their speed and light armament to accomplish a series of mercenary missions. That's not to say all the aircraft are small, though – floating in between the one-man fighters are a variety of hulking dirigibles and helicarriers, all divided up into a host of animating propellers, cannons, and independent moving bits. Bullets fly, explosions spew smoke, and the fireworks missiles are something else.

The mix of big and little creates some amazing aerial battles, as you assault capital ships and dodge squadrons of fighters at the same time. *Sky Gunner* keeps track of the action very well, using a unique target-focused camera. It's not unique in the sense that it's never been tried

before, but it is unique in that it works better than any other implementation of the technique. The camera looks at whatever you've locked onto, and you guide your craft in that direction using well-designed crosshairs to peg your aiming point and keep on track. The camera direction, flight control, and area scale together to prevent any serious confusion from resulting, and keeping the camera focused on the action makes for a much more visually exciting experience.

Sometimes it's a little too exciting, though – the framerate drops dangerously low at times. Atlus isn't ignoring the problem, though, with a couple of fixes in the works for the American release later this year. If all goes well, the result should be a little something for everyone, even if there's a little bit more for those of us who dig the big eyes, the Miyazaki planes, and the cute hand-drawn cutscenes. After all, in today's market, there's nothing wrong with a little niche appeal. – **David Smith** ■



Details ::

Publisher :: Atlus

Developer :: Pixel Arts

Genre :: Shooter

Number of Players :: 2

Release Date :: Summer 2002



PlayStation 2 :: Review

SMASH COURT TENNIS PRO TOURNAMENT

Namco's pro tennis game goes through the motions but leaves you wanting more.

After Sega cleared the path for tennis in the videogame world with *Virtua Tennis*, publishers who've tried on and off for years to perfect tennis games have come out of the woodwork with their own series. Namco's *Smash Court Tennis Pro Tournament* is a respectable tennis game, replete with the top tennis licenses, including players, courts, et al, but it's also a case in point of a game that doesn't provide the spark, the joie de vivre, the creative fire, that generates a love for the game. With such high-ranking competition, *Smash Court Tennis* just doesn't cut it.

True, *Smash Court* is the only tennis game on PS2, but knowing that Sega's game is right around the corner makes me want to wait. The biggest and best feature in this game, naturally, is that it's filled with stellar pros, from the top male to the top female players, including Pete Sampras (US), Andre Agassi (US), Martina Hingis (Switzerland), Patrick Rafter (Australia), Yevgeny Kafelnikov (Russia), Monica Seles (US), Lindsay Davenport (US), and Anna Kournikova (Russia). Unfortunately, Andy Roddick, Lleyton Hewitt, Jennifer Capriati, and the Williams sisters aren't here, but you can't have everything.

The plain fact is that it's awesome knowing you can play as any one of these athletes. Unfortunately, the onscreen re-creations of these players don't do the players justice. From their faces to their bodies, most of these polygonal players only match up if you squint your eyes. When you get a good look at say, Monica, her nose and face are all wrong. However, it appears Namco's development team took extra pains to get Anna's body right.



The game itself is quite plain and easy. Playing *Smash Court* is essentially getting used to a few simple strokes and then perfecting your serve. It does get harder, but the depth of the players just isn't there, and the variety of their styles and the differences between the ways they play isn't enough to sell me on buying this game. Renting it, yes. Buying it, no.

The modes are all standard, including Arcade, Pro Tournament, Challenge, Exhibition, Grand Slam, and Time Attack modes. Tournaments such as the US Open, Wimbledon, and the French and Australian Opens are available, too. Unfortunately, there isn't enough variety of locations, and these courts grow old quickly. What does excite me about as much as playing as Anna Kournikova is playing doubles against the computer, but even more exciting than playing doubles against the computer is playing doubles via the Multitap against three other human players.

In the end, *Smart Court Tennis* is a decent game that offers a great license, good locations, and a great doubles match, but it's no match for *Tennis 2K2*, which features better modes, better looking players, and tight, tough gameplay, even if it's only on Dreamcast at the moment.

– Douglass C. Perry ■

Details ::

Publisher :: Namco

Developer :: Namco

Genre :: Sports

Number of Players :: 4

Release Date :: March 2001

Ratings ::

Presentation :: 7.0

Graphics :: 6.0

Sound :: 8.0

Gameplay :: 7.0

Lasting Appeal :: 6.0

Overall Score

7.0

**Craig Harris****This Month in GBA ::**

By now you've probably heard the rumors: Nintendo's set to release a Game Boy Advance Plus system by this summer, a system that will finally resolve the screen brightness issue. It's not really that creative a rumor; it's like saying Taco Bell's about to introduce a new burrito next Tuesday.

Though the system's LCD is super crisp with no refresh blur, it really is a step backwards because of its reflective technology. Nintendo opted for this screen because of battery consumption... adding a light would suck more juice out of those AA batteries, leaving less time for gameplay. But with many people buying a light peripheral that draws power from the system anyway, this decision is moot for about half the GBA gaming population.

Do I think the rumor of the GBA Plus is real? Hell yes. I think that it's the reason why the GBA systems dropped more than 30 bucks at retail this past month. With the system as low as 60 bucks in stores, a more expensive, lit version can hit shelves for under 100 bucks as well. Expect an announcement at E3.

For more GBA news, reviews, previews, and more, visit <http://gba.ign.com>.

**Featured Preview ::****035 :: All-Star Baseball 2003****Also In This Issue ::****036 :: Preview: Defender of the Crown****037 :: Preview: Aero the Acrobat****Preview :: Defender of the Crown**

Game Boy Advance owners can soon experience the wonders of an Amiga classic.

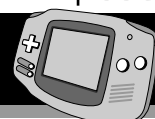
**Preview :: Aero the Acrobat**

A Super NES action hero flips over to the Game Boy Advance.

Editor's Most Wanted ::

- 1 :: Super Smash Bros. (GBA)**
- 2 :: Super Punch Out (GBA)**
- 3 :: Super Metroid (GBA)**
- 4 :: Super Ghouls 'N Ghosts (GBA)**
- 5 :: Superpowers (Me)**

Office Humor ::
Game Boy Advance systems
do not float in toilet water.
Trust us on this one.



Game Boy Advance :: Preview

ALL-STAR BASEBALL 2003

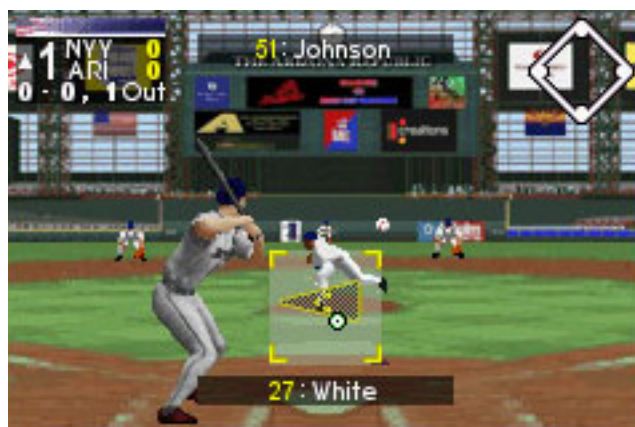
Acclaim swings for the fences in the company's first baseball title for the Game Boy Advance.

Last year we didn't get much of a choice when it came to handheld baseball games...we got crap (*High Heat Baseball 2002*) and more crap (*Sports Illustrated for Kids: Baseball*), both at nearly the exact same time last September. This year we're promised a similar glut of good baseball titles for the start of the season, and one that looks extremely promising is Acclaim's upcoming *All-Star Baseball 2003* for the Game Boy Advance.

Though the GBA version of the series won't have the same incredible 3D presentation of the console versions, developer Software Creations (the same development house responsible for the first *Ken Griffey Jr.* game for the Super NES) is at least working with the system's strengths to mirror most of the gameplay for the portable rendition. The batting engine looks to have been directly pulled from the GameCube, PS2, and X-Box versions, as players will be able to direct and angle shots by using the on-screen heads-up display...a nifty feature that's definitely an ASB staple. Let's just hope the hitting game is a bit more lively than the console iterations...

Six play modes will be sandwiched into the cartridge, including Exhibition, Quick Play, All-Star Game, Series, Home Run Derby, as well as batting practice mode. And yes, *All-Star Baseball 2003* prominently features the Major League Baseball license, so all 30 teams' stadiums and more than 700 pros will be in the GBA game. A battery save will assist in recording players' progress throughout a season or playoff, and if two players want to get in on the act, all they need is a second system, a link cable, and an additional cartridge. Playing sports games is obviously a lot more enjoyable with a human opponent, so it's damn good that this mode's been implemented on the Game Boy Advance.

This isn't this first time that the series has come to the handheld market, as two average versions of the series have popped up on the Game Boy Color over the past couple of years...not to mention the several other versions released over the original Game Boy's decade lifespan. *All-Star Baseball 2003* for the GBA is expected to hit shelves in early April, just in time for the first pitch of the season. — **Craig Harris** ■



Details ::

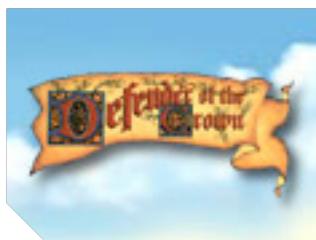
Publisher :: Acclaim

Developer :: Software Creations

of Players :: 2

Genre :: Sports

Release Date :: April 2002



Game Boy Advance :: Preview

DEFENDER OF THE CROWN

Game Boy Advance owners can soon experience the wonders of an Amiga classic.

For those of you lucky enough to own a relatively powerful computer back in the late '80s/early '90s, be it an Amiga, Atari ST, Apple IIGS, you'll probably remember the name Cinemaware. This was a development house and publisher that produced games that really took advantage of these computer systems' graphics and sound capabilities (which were way better than what the PC was pushing with its EGA graphics and Adlib sound). Those computer systems may be gone...and their death almost took Cinemaware with them. But the company's making a comeback almost ten years later, and it's producing Game Boy Advance versions of the games it released back at the height of Cinemaware's popularity. One of the first and most popular games in the company's library is on its way: *Defender of the Crown*.

In *Defender of the Crown*, England's been thrown into a civil war after King Richard's murder, and the dividing factions, the Saxons and the Normans, are battling it out to conquer the land. You assume the role of the newly-appointed Saxon leader, and your task is to retake England one territory at a time. Storm the castle via hand-to-hand and sword-to-sword combat, by launching rocks and oil via catapult, or win the territory in a "friendly" joust tournament. You'll even recruit the help of famed hero Robin Hood to advance your army forward as well as to rescue the hot babe locked away high in the tower. By winning tasks set forth in each territory, you'll slowly retake England until the final battle...

The GBA game will be a port of the Amiga/Atari ST/Apple IIGS versions with one difference: no freakin' load times. The games of the past all ran off of the uber-slow 3 1/2 floppy drive, and the cartridge based Game Boy Advance is a bit friendlier for quick-paced gaming. Crawfish Interactive, the same development house responsible for other Cinemaware-to-GBA classics including *The Three Stooges* and *Wings*, is working on the GBA port, and it promises that a few new enhanced gameplay modes will be thrown into the mix. We'll see how well this game stands the test of time when it's released this May.

— Craig Harris ■



Details ::

Publisher :: Metro 3D

Developer :: Cinemaware and Crawfish Interactive

of Players :: 2

Genre :: Sports

Release Date :: April 2002



Game Boy Advance :: Preview

AERO THE ACROBAT

A Super NES action hero flips over to the Game Boy Advance.

Platformer heroes came and went by the dozens during the time of the Genesis and Super NES...sort of like Carrot Top's movie career. There was only so much that could be done on those systems, and most developers avoided creative design by resorting to the tried-and-true platform genre. One of the better platform games that hit the 16-bit era was a game released by Sunsoft: *Aero the Acrobat*. The original designer of the game has retained the rights and is producing a Game Boy Advance version of the same game released for the SNES and Genesis a decade ago.

Seems The World of Amusement and Funpark have been sabotaged by the Psycho Circus gang, headed up by Zero the Kamikaze Squirrel (a character who was spun off into his own game series, if you can believe it). Aero the Acrobat is the Funpark's only hope, and he'll have to put all his circus techniques to use if he's going to save the day. Aero can fly, glide (he's an Acro-bat...get it?), climb and, of course, butt-stomp enemies...what platform hero can't do that, right?

All of the art assets used in the Super NES game are being converted for use on the Game Boy Advance, so if you played the original game ten years ago, you'll find yourself in familiar territory accompanied by some very slick background designs and character animations. Since the game's based in and around a circus, the game's levels have been designed entirely with that motif. Aero will have to walk or ride unicycles across tightropes, launch out of cannons, dive through flaming hoops...even wander across moving roller coaster cars in order to advance through the dozens of levels in this GBA game. Aero will even get to

bungee-jump in a rather clever bonus round that takes advantage of the handheld's pseudo-3D capabilities.

Metro 3D, the publisher of other GBA games including *Defender of the Crown*, *The Three Stooges*, and *Wings*, will release *Aero the Acrobat* this June. — **Craig Harris** ■



Details ::

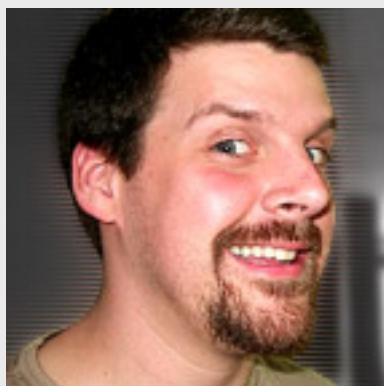
Publisher :: Metro 3D

Developer :: Atomic Planet & David Siller

of Players :: 1

Genre :: Platformer

Release Date :: June 2002



Steve Butts

This Month in PC ::

Well, between the betas of Dungeon Siege and Warcraft III, there's been very little "work" done here at IGNPC this past month. Luckily these have traditionally been our slow months anyway. Even so, the slight lull we normally experience during the early part of the year was complicated somewhat by our site relaunch. Working sixty-hour weeks is a real test of one's dedication. But we're still here and, once we're up to speed with the new publishing system, things'll start running like normal again.

But even with the extra work involved in moving over to the new site, we all found time to reconnect with our favorite pastime and to remember why we love playing games so much. I tried out several new titles – Serious Sam: The Second Encounter, SimGolf and Disciples II – and I've even played some old favorites like Crimson Skies, Risk II and No One Lives Forever. Hundreds of new games come out every year, but that's no excuse for forgetting the better ones of years past. Like the black and orange IGN, some of these older titles will always hold a special place in my heart.

For more PC news, reviews, previews, codes and more, visit <http://pc.ign.com>.



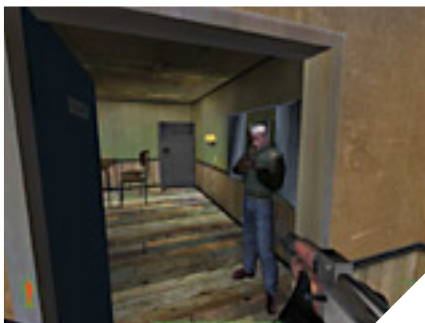
Featured Preview ::

039 :: Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3

Also In This Issue ::

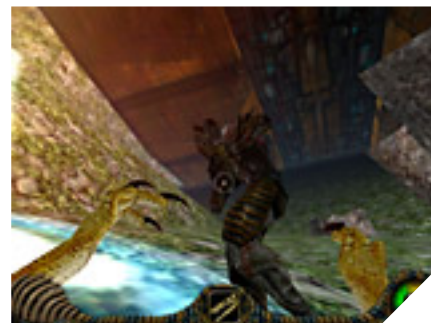
040 :: Preview: IGI 2: Covert Strike

041 :: Preview: Carnivores Cityscape



Preview: IGI 2: Covert Strike

Flight-sim technology, first-person shooting design...David Jones is back and I'm Going In, again.



Preview: Carnivores Cityscape

They're through Feed'n Chloe, it's time for a Seriously powered dinosaur endeavor.

Editor's Most Wanted ::

- 1 :: Master of Orion III
- 2 :: Dungeon Siege
- 3 :: Age of Mythology
- 4 :: A freakin' minute's peace
- 5 :: A grant to quit my job and play Civ III

Office Abuse ::
Over the last few months someone's slowly been pushing Craig's desk closer to Steve's.



PC :: Preview

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

I groped and grabbed the most prominent figure in skating's third PC outing.

Only recently, in what came as somewhat of a shock to the PC gaming industry, acclaimed masters of the FPS, Gearbox Software (makers of many things *Half-Life*), announced that they would be the ones to port over *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3* under Activision's wing. Indeed, trusting the PS2's, GameCube's, and Xbox's greatest skateboarding endeavor into the hands of this studio was quite the monumental decision. What do these resident FPS buffs know about darkslides and heel flips anyway? Probably not much, but they sure do know PC technology.

Thanks to them, the Hawk-man and co. will be making their highly anticipated personal computing debut this winter. Don't fret, that actually means this very season, or "really damn soon," for the layman. So in comes heroic Activision with the early playable. Those sweethearts, always making my day.

Tony Hawk is all about skateboarding, but more than just breezing around a track, smoking, littering, and using foul language (I'm all about the hate mail, see) the game relies heavily on clever objective-based scenarios, old school secrets, and classic point attainment in order to retain its mass appeal. This incredibly addictive, phenomenally lucrative series has entranced millions upon millions of people -- this third outing by far being the undisputed king of the crop.

Incorporating huge, graphically rich worlds where nearly everything can be in some way played on, *THPS3* builds upon its predecessor by offering more robust editing and customization components, as well as online play.

Console centric to say the least, this will certainly be that game that requires all of us too stubborn to invest in

the joys of joypads to finally bite the bullet and pick up some kind of eight-way goodness, whether it be the Thrustmaster Dual Power or the Gravis Aftershock. Playable with a keyboard or joystick this game is not. Even Mike Wiley, *Tony Hawk* pro beyond all pros, was only able to attain 100 thousand point combos (normally he'd grab 200). I, the average but competent player, was content with repeatedly crashing into the wall. I'm confident the tides will turn once the final comes around.

All the courses, kids, kicks, and sticks will be intact, but also included for the PC version will be four new multiplayer maps and even full online play featuring team-based runs.

Much to our dismay, we've sadly yet to be able to experience all of these sure to be rowdy multiplayer options. Plenty of work also still needs to be put into the fields of graphics and audio (settings and bugs), but *THPS3* is already looking a nifty kind of spiffy.

Look for movies, further impressions, and a full review on IGNPC from now until the game's release later this winter. -- **Ivan Sulic** ■



Details ::

Publisher :: Activision

Developer :: Gearbox Software

Genre :: Extreme Sports

of Players :: 8

Release Date :: Winter 2002



PC :: Preview

IGI 2: COVERT STRIKE

Flight-sim technology, first-person shooting design...David Jones is back and I'm Going In, again.

David Jones is a man of many seasons. That's to say he's no doubt capable of killing all kinds of hapless terrorists and other scum during winter, summer, autumn, or even spring. And in *IGI 2: Covert Strike*, the secret government agent is going to beckon you to prove just that.

The sequel to a cult praised but majorly shunned "intelligent," realism grounded first-person shooter, *IGI 2*'s crux is the same as its progenitor's was: sneak your way into various compounds of evil and shoot your way out. The problems with the first *I'm Going In* were numerous and glaring. Most notably, the AI was horrid beyond horrid. Enemies could be speaking to their closest friends as you mowed them down from behind and it was rare that you'd witness any kind of a reaction whatsoever. This time around the developers at Innerloop are promising a more refined and believable experience, where bad guys actually shoot back and pursue you without suspiciously accurate knowledge of your whereabouts.

Ironically enough, the build I played seemed to be most prominently missing this newfound artificial intelligence that has been so highly spoken of. I walked up to a conversing group of baddies who were idly standing about enjoying their existences, and I proceeded to shoot each of them in the kneecaps with ne'er a repercussion. Clearly this is still a bug to be fixed, but the mystery of whether or not the final will be able to remedy the problems of the prior remains.

From what I've played, it's clear that the now improved adopted and adapted flight-simulation engine that has been put into effect will once again be a backbone for the style and tactics on which the game revolves. Assessing your targets from afar is critical, as is monitoring their movements on your approach. You can't just run at the fence and muddle your way in toward your objective, unless you enjoy dying. *IGI 2* requires that you sneak up behind rocks, move around buildings, and spot targets before they spot you. What's cool is that all of this is done at staggering distances (flight-sim style landscapes). The enormity and scale of the environments is truly remarkable.

I've barely scratched the surface of the game's single-player campaign, but already I can see how logical puzzle solving elements will appear in full force. Really thinking about your objective and using the provided information to reach it is a huge component of play. Why is that guy walking there? What is that for? Can I get there if I first

go through here? It'll be interesting to see how the final manages to develop and implement all of this with the promise of a refined AI. – **Ivan Sulic** ■



Details ::

Publisher :: Codemasters

Developer :: Innerloop

Genre :: First-Person Shooter

of Players :: TBA

Release Date :: June 2002



PC :: Preview

CARNIVORES CITYSCAPE

They're through Feed'n Chloe, it's time for a Seriously powered dinosaur endeavor.

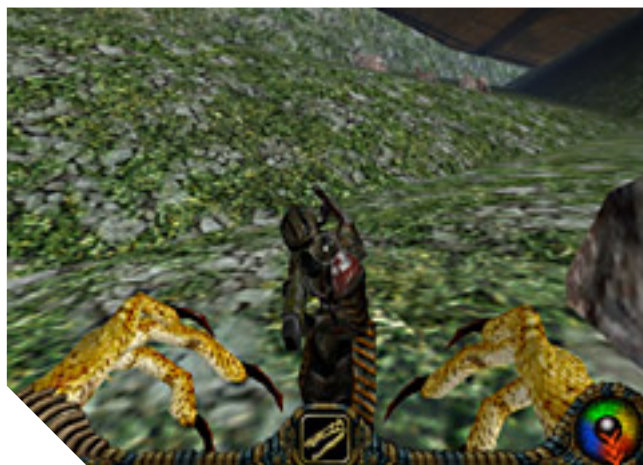
We've all done it. Hell, I can't stop doing it. Of course I feel guilty about it. Anyone with a conscience would, but the appeal and pleasure are too great to deny. And guilt – well, it subsides. I don't know what I'd do if anyone caught me in the middle of my sinful act. And sometimes I've had some pretty close calls. But the allure is overwhelming, all encompassing, and far too enticing to turn away. The sad state of human nature to cave into temptation at all times doesn't help much.

Whatever am I talking about? Hunting dinosaurs of course. Why, what did you think?

Carnivores Cityscape promises to take all the thrills, chills, spills, and lustful excitement associated with stalking and murdering dinosaurs and package it all into one budget-priced first-person shooter. Don't get me wrong though, a hunting game this is not. It's far more akin to *Turok* than it is to *Deer Hunter*.

For starters, this latest *Carnivores* uses the *Serious Sam* engine. I'll be the first to admit that it's not going to topple the king of the bargain bin anytime soon (Sam stands tall and alone), but it's really nice to finally see that fine, fine piece of technology get the recognition it deserves...in this Sunstorm Interactive game. So maybe the makers of *Feed'n Chloe* and some other drabble wouldn't have been my first choice to strut the *Serious* stuff, but the engine is still nevertheless sound.

The game I played was noticeably early and hard to gauge. Graphical changes didn't seem to take effect when applied and would even have bizarre, unwanted repercussions (like turning everything practically black and white). Still, some of the qualities readily found throughout the *Sam* outings are already making their appearances here.



The environments are big. You can walk and see for miles, though the game doesn't seem to be as populated or frantic as *Sam* was. The first level has you marching over great distances with only sporadic Compi encounters. The little buggers attack in small packs and chew away at your shins.

Since *Carnivores* takes place far into the future on a distant planet, there are not only sci-fi themed environments, but also weapons at your disposal. You choose two to begin with along with your sidearm and then get to adventuring. The assault rifle and its model are a personal favorite of mine.

As I mentioned, it's still apparent that there is much work still to be done. But with a planned release date rapidly approaching, it's hard to tell if what I've been playing is merely the downside of alpha development or the sad nature of the beast.

Whatever the outcome, we'll be back to venture deep into the land of the dino once again come review time.

– Ivan Sulic ■

Details ::

Publisher :: Infogrames

Developer :: Sunstorm Interactive

Genre :: First-Person Shooter

of Players :: 16

Release Date :: March 2002



Brian Linder

This Month in Entertainment ::

It's March madness at the box office kids, and there's plenty to keep us busy over at IGN FilmForce. Early in the month we've got 20th Century Fox's CG-animated *Ice Age*, along with the highly anticipated *Resident Evil* movie. That should be a big one for all you gamers!

Then there's *Blade II* on the 22nd – it's sure to be a killer flick (pun intended?). *E.T.* also returns to our planet this month for the film's 20th anniversary re-release.

And March winds up with Jodie Foster's thriller *Panic Room*, and the Robin Williams-Ed Norton comedy *Death to Smoochy* – both of which should be pretty cool.

I'm personally diggin' on all of those flicks with the possible exception of *E.T.* – just not a fan. I'd much rather see an *Alf* movie, but that's just me.

The home entertainment realm will see some cool releases also. Baz Luhrmann's first film, *Strictly Ballroom*, comes to DVD, as well as the Oscar-nominated cop drama *Training Day*, and the first season of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* also arrives in a sweet boxed set.

See ya around!

Now open 24 hours!
http://entertainment.ign.com



Featured Preview ::

043 :: Ice Age Movie

Also In This Issue ::

044 :: Movie Preview - Resident Evil

045 :: Gear Review - Sharp's Aquos Flat Panel Television

047 :: DVD Previews (*Romeo + Juliet: SE, Training Day*)



Aquos Flat Panel Television

We take Sharp's baby Aquos for a long, smooth test drive.



Romeo + Juliet: Special Edition

Baz Luhrmann's popular version of the classic get a new special edition.

Editor's Most Wanted ::

- 1 :: Star Wars: Episode II
- 2 :: The X-Files Series Finale
- 3 :: Evolution Motion Picture Player
- 4 :: Spider-Man
- 5 :: Disney's Lilo & Stitch

Office Abuse ::
Brian Linder's favorite thing about March is Marshmallow Peeps.



FilmForce Movie :: Preview

ICE AGE ::

Ice, Ice, baby...

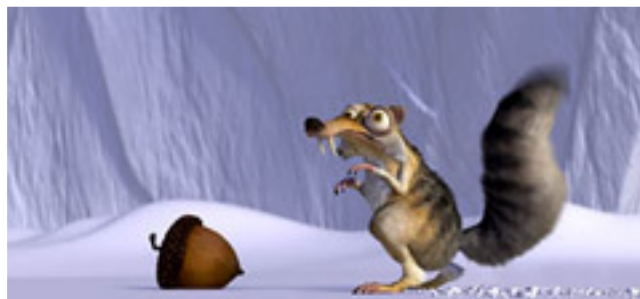
Ice Age is set twenty thousand years ago, in a time when glaciers overran the Earth. Creatures everywhere were fleeing the onslaught of the new Ice Age. In this time of peril, we meet the weirdest herd of any Age: a fast talking but dim sloth named Sid (voiced by John Leguizamo); a moody woolly mammoth named Manny (Ray Romano); a devilish saber-toothed tiger named Diego (Denis Leary); and an acorn-crazy saber-toothed squirrel called Scratt. This motley foursome unexpectedly, and reluctantly, unites in a quest to return a human baby to its father.

The word on *Ice Age* is pretty positive. This all-digital animated flick doesn't try to be *Shrek* or *Monsters, Inc.*, it is content to be itself - a quirky, funny and unique little film.

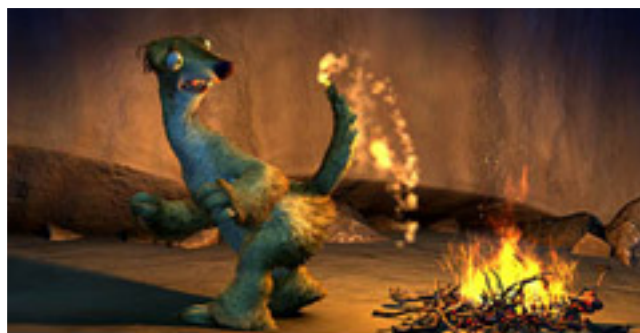
Ice Age is created by Twentieth Century Fox Animation and Academy Award-winning director Chris Wedge. Wedge, co-founder of Blue Sky Studios (acquired by Fox Animation), won the Oscar for the directing the animated short *Bunny*. - **Brian Linder** ■



Sid and Manny in Fox's *Ice Age*.



The Scratt's one mission in life - to retrieve a precious acorn - triggers the ice age in.



Sid the sloth warms up.

Movie Info ::

Genre :: Comedy/Animation/Family

Rating :: PG for mild peril

Release Date :: March 15, 2002

Starring :: Voices of Ray Romano, John Leguizamo and Denis Leary

Director :: Chris Wedge

Writer :: Michael G. Wilson, Michael Berg, et al

**FilmForce Movie :: Preview**
RESIDENT EVIL ::**A Breath of Fresh Scare****A secret experiment...a deadly virus...a fatal mistake.**

Resident Evil is billed as an action-packed thriller starring Milla Jovovich (*The Fifth Element*), Michelle Rodriguez (*The Fast and the Furious*) and Eric Mabius (*Cruel Intentions*) in a battle of good versus evil – specifically good living people verses evil dead people.

Something terrible is lurking in the Hive, a vast underground genetic research facility run by the Umbrella Corporation, a faceless bioengineering conglomerate. A deadly viral outbreak occurs, and the Red Queen – a vast supercomputer that controls and monitors the Hive – seals the entire facility to contain it.

Alice (Jovovich) and Rain (Rodriguez) must lead their commando team to isolate the virus that has killed Umbrella's research staff...or so they think. Our heroes make a terrifying discovery: the entire staff has been transformed into ravenous Undead, and they are searching the Hive for prey. A single bite or scratch from an *Undead* causes infection or worse, instant transformation into their kind.

Alice and her team have three hours to complete their mission before the virus overruns the Earth. To access the Red Queen, the team must pass through a series of increasingly horrifying obstacles in the maze-like Hive: deadly lasers, mutant dogs and a room full of gruesome specimens – the results of Umbrella's twisted experimental research. Alice soon discovers that the former humans are the ghastly result of Umbrella's latest project gone awry – the T-virus.

The virus was originally designed to combat aging and fight nerve-based diseases, hence its ability to reanimate dead cells. Alice realizes that an unknown saboteur has stolen the virus and freed it into the Hive's atmosphere.

Confronting the artificially intelligent Red Queen, Rain demands that she lead them to the surface. The Red Queen agrees, but insists that no one who is infected will be allowed to escape – unless they can find the Anti-Virus first. Standing in their way is a genetically mutated experiment that is now a vicious creature known as "the Licker," who is bent on destroying them all. The Licker's strength increases with each victim it slays, making the team's job even more dangerous.

The team must defeat the Red Queen and find the anti-virus in time. Which of them, if any, will escape the evil Hive alive?

Fans of the widely popular Capcom title have been anticipating this game-to-film adaptation for quite some

time. Will it live up to their expectations? Die-hard *Resident Evil* purists might be put off by the film playing fast and loose with the heretofore accepted RE mythology, but if you just liked blowing up zombies you'll dig it just fine. The early buzz is fairly good, and if you're a fan of the classic George Romero zombie flicks, you should seriously dig on *Resident Evil*. – **Brian Linder** ■



Milla Jovovich fends off some adoring fans in *Resident Evil*.

Movie Info ::**Genre ::** Horror/Thriller/Action/Adventure**Rating ::** R for strong violence, language, and brief nudity.**Release Date ::** March 15, 2002**Starring ::** Milla Jovovich, Michelle Rodriguez, Eric Mabius**Director ::** Paul W.S. Anderson**Writer ::** Paul W.S. Anderson, Alan McElroy

**SHARP**
AQUOS**Gear :: Review**

IT'S A FLAT, FLAT, FLAT, FLAT WORLD

We take Sharp's baby Aquos for a long, smooth test drive.

Who the hell *doesn't* want a flat panel television of some sort? Before you videophiles object, I'll admit that neither plasma nor LCD can deliver the image quality of CRT, but they're getting closer every year. (Imagine you had actually dumped your piggybank on one of the dogs a few years ago just because you got all excited?) Plus, flat sets have several benefits over their more traditional counterparts. Firstly, they occupy a minimum of space. Secondly, they are lightweight. (If you don't think that's much of an issue, ask someone who's had to move a gargantuan set) Lastly, flat panel TVs are incredibly cool. And if that makes me a shallow or irresponsible consumer, then so be it.

Sharp's Aquos line of LCDs includes three models: 13, 15, and 20 inchers. While this might seem a bit small compared to the enormous plasmas bandied about these days, the Aquos sets aren't really intended as home theaters centerpieces. Instead, they are meant as high-quality secondary TVs. Many of the press images show them set in high-tech kitchens, offices, etc. It might seem far-flung to invest so much in something you would just plop in the guest room, but apparently the marketing is working, as the Aquos line has become very popular. Sharp sent me the 13-inch Aquos (of course) for a few weeks, and after getting used to the little set, I have to say that if my pockets were a bit deeper I would seriously consider buying one.

The big draw is obviously the screen itself, which measures 13 inches diagonally and is paper-thin. Remember that, unlike their CRT counterparts, LCD screen measurements are totally viewable. And while 13 inches is... modest... it's a true 13 inches. The 4:3 black TFT panel can display up to 921,600 pixels, running a maximum resolution of 640 x 480. You should immediately recognize that the Aquos is not HD compatible. However, given the small size, the standard resolution makes for a great image. I ran plenty of movies and videogames through the Aquos and they all looked great. Granted, you could see pixels if you got right up on the set, but from a normal distance it was very pleasing. The overall image was very sharp and clear. With a few incredibly fast games, the blurring effect was very noticeable, but that's the nature of the beast. And as anyone who's used an LCD for very long will tell you, you get used to the motion blur. The tradeoffs make it worthwhile. For instance, there are almost no geometry problems with LCD sets. Additionally,

the screen offers uniform sharpness and brightness from corner to corner.

Speaking of brightness, LCDs have come a long way in the last couple years. (Incidentally, so have plasma and rear projection sets.) While their predecessors had plenty of lighting problems, the new models are much more versatile. The Aquos has a 160-deegree viewing angle



**SHARP**
AQUOS

Gear :: Review

IT'S A FLAT, FLAT, FLAT, FLAT WORLD (cont.)

We take Sharp's baby Aquos for a long, smooth test drive.

(both horizontal and vertical), a 350:1 contrast ratio, and is plenty bright. That viewing angle means that you can clearly see the image from almost anywhere in the room. The operative word in the last sentence is "clearly," as you can watch the set without it looking polarized or spotty from the sides. The 350:1 contrast ratio is not as high as those in CRTs, or even superior flat panels, but it is respectable. Blacks looked a bit washed out, but not so badly that it took away from the viewing experience. The Aquos threw out enough light to watch in well lit areas, but like any monitor, direct light will wreak havoc. Overall, the image quality was very good. Natural limitations of the technology keep it from being great, but as LCDs go, it was a fine little screen.

Sharp took care to equip the Aquos with a solid array of inputs and outputs. I was very impressed when I turned the little thing around. Not only are there twin RCA and an S-video ins, but also honest-to-goodness component inputs. Despite the set's lack of HD resolution, the component ins allow for the best possible interface. The jump from RCA to S-video was more dramatic than that from S-video to component. However, while subtle, the difference was appreciable. There are no digital audio inputs, but why would there be?

In terms of additional features, the Aquos has many of the pleasantries found in bigger sets. The integrated speakers are somewhat limited in terms of power – a monstrous 2.1 watts surge through each channel – but sound good enough. I would bet that many users would opt for an external sound system, even it were similarly tiny, but the Sharp speakers provide nice, even sound. Bassheads will be a bit disappointed, as it is near impossible for such small speakers to hit the low notes, but the high and mid ranges are crystal clear. Should you route the audio to an external rig, the Aquos has both fixed and variable outs.

Sharp ships the Aquos with an oddly shaped but very useful remote. The front half of the clicker fans outward sharply and the buttons are widely spaced; it feels very natural in hand and the buttons can be easily located without sight. The shape will also distinguish the remote from your current collection, which is always a nice thing.

The Aquos lacks PIP. This might normally be cause for object, but the PIP on a set this size would be almost unusable, so it's not such a major exclusion. Sharp included trilingual language support (English, French, and Spanish), and V-Chip operation. Finally, the set has a built-

in alarm/sleep function, for those of you who enjoy waking up and/or dozing off to the tube.

At what price does all this goodness come? \$1,200.00. You can tack an extra \$75.00 on to that if you want the wall mount. Before the sticker shock takes hold, keep in mind that the Aquos represents the high end of LCD sets and as such it is an extremely nice model. In other words, it's not supposed to be a budget model, and it's doubtful that Sharp could sell it as such even if they wanted to.

If you are in the market for an upscale LCD for a small space on your desk or in your house, then I see little reason not to invest in an Aquos. And if my opinion isn't enough, take a look for yourself. One look and you'll be sold. Now all you have to do is find 120,000 pennies.

– Mike Wiley ■





DVD :: Preview
ROMEO + JULIET: SPECIAL EDITION ::



Baz Luhrmann's popular version of the classic play was once released by Fox in a bare-bones edition, but this month it will see a new DVD packed full of special features:

DISC FEATURES ::

- Interview Gallery featuring interviews with Baz Luhrmann, Leonardo DiCaprio, Claire Danes and John Leguizamo
- Two music videos: "Kissing You" and "Young Hearts"
- Commentary by Baz Luhrmann, Catherine Martin, Donald McAlpine and Craig Pearce
- Impact piece
- Director's Gallery
- Director of Photography's Gallery
- Design Gallery
- Trailer and Television spots

DVD Info ::

Price :: \$19.98

Release :: March 12, 2002

DVD :: Preview
TRAINING DAY ::



The Denzel Washington/Ethan Hawk cop film, *Training Day*, scored a respectable \$75 million during its theatrical run, and Denzel's performance as a "bad cop" earned him an Academy Award nomination.

Now the flick is headed to DVD complete with a 2.35:1 anamorphic widescreen transfer, a crisp Dolby Digital 5.1 soundtrack, and the following special features:

DISC FEATURES ::

- Audio commentary by director Antoine Fuqua
- Alternate endings
- Deleted scenes
- Behind-the-Scenes documentary
- Two music videos
- Trailers

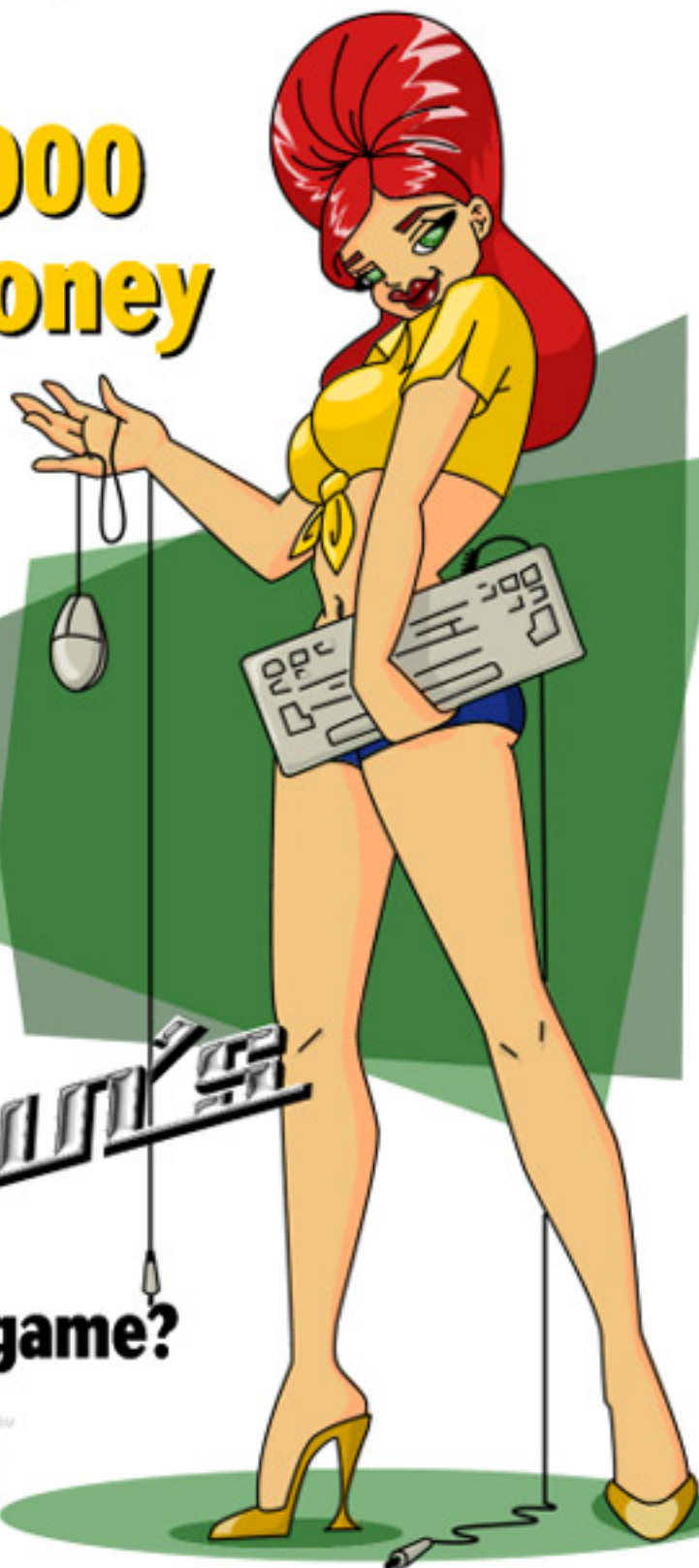
DVD Info ::

Price :: \$26.98

Release :: March 19, 2002

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gamefixx.com
<http://www.gamefixx.com/tournament/>

**Chris "El Sexo" Carle****This Month in Codes ::**

It's March again...and you know what that means: a lot of basketball and broken promises. I had planned on having the second installment of the *Harvest Moon: Save the Homeland* guide for you this month, but then a little game by the name of *NBA Inside Drive 2002* jumped up and interfered with all of that. The game has taken over my life. I have maneuvered my Dallas Mavericks (without the help of injured Michael Finley) to the brink of the NBA Finals. All that remains is to destroy the hapless Detroit Pistons. And destroy them I shall.

With all this practice at *Inside Drive*, I decided to write a guide to save you the hassle and heartbreak of beginning your Season with a dismal 2-15 record (as I did). In it, you'll find all kinds of tips to elevate your game to the next level as well as a full slate of codes.

In addition, I've compiled a list of the hottest codes for the newest games. Be sure to check out the ones for *Pirates: Legend of Black Kat*. These are some of the juiciest cheats we've seen in quite some time. Take a look at the *NBA 2K2* codes for the Dreamcast while you're here. They just might be the last DC codes we ever print here. Excelsior!

For more codes, guides, corpses & more, visit
<http://codes.ign.com> or
<http://guides.ign.com>.

**Featured Guide ::****055 :: NBA Inside Drive 2002**

Take your game to the next level with our full guide.



Wreckless: The Yakuza Mission
(Xbox) - Unlock: Big 4WD, Trucks, New Cars, Replay Filters and more.



Rogue Leader: Rogue Squadron II
(GCN) - Unlock TIE Fighter, Millenium Falcon, and Naboo Starfighter the easy way!

Editor's Most Wanted ::

- 1 :: Hunter: The Reckoning (Xbox)
- 2 :: Animal Forest (GCN)
- 3 :: Mulholland Drive (DVD)
- 4 :: Soccer Slam (GCN)
- 5 :: Armada 2 (PS2)

Office Abuse ::

At age 13, Chris went shirtless at a Packer game in January. In magic marker on his chest was a huge #7... Don Majkowski's number.



Golden Sun (GBA)

Rename Party Members Plus Secondary Characters

Before you name your character, enter this code, and you'll be able to name everyone in your party, plus a few secondary characters: UP, DOWN, UP, DOWN, LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT, RIGHT, UP, RIGHT, DOWN, LEFT, UP, SELECT.

Rename People in Your Party

Press SELECT three times before you put in your name to rename everyone in your party.

Pirates: Legend of Black Kat (PS2)

Reveal all of the Buried Chests on the Map

Upon entering the following code all of the buried chests will be revealed on the map. While holding R1 and R2 enter the following: Circle, X, Square, Triangle, L1, L3, L2, L3, R3. Now all of the hidden booty will be marked on the Captain's Log Maps with a green X.

Treasure Chests on Map!

Treasure chests usually show up on the map when you're relatively close to them. This code will reveal all the non-buried, un-opened chests on the map long before you see them. While holding R1 and R2 press: R3, X, Triangle, L3, Circle, L1, Select, L3, Square, L2. Now all of the chests are in plain sight...well on your map anyways.

Unlock Helium Mode

This code will create a helium environment. No, you will not be able to float, but all of your speech will be modified. While holding down R1 and R2 press: R3, Circle, Select, X, R3, Triangle, L1, Square, L2, L3.

Unlock Infinite Items... Well Infinite When You Find Them Anyways

Once you discover an item, this code will make it so you never run out. Hold R1 and R2 and enter the following code: Triangle, L1, Select, L2, R3, L3, Square, X, R3, Circle.

Unlock Invulnerability

So you're tired of taking damage, are you? You want the game to be easier? Well enter the following and Katarina will never take damage. While holding R1 and R2 press: X, Circle, L3, Triangle, R3, Select, R3, L1, L2, Square.

Unlock Katarina's Next Sword

This code will change your current sword into the next available sword. While holding down the L1 and L2 buttons press: R3, Select, L2, L3, Square, X, L1, Circle, L3, Triangle.

Unlock Katarina's Secret Costumes

Go to the main game menu. On controller one hold:

L1, L2, Up(D-pad), Select, L3

At the same time on controller two hold:

R1, R2, Triangle, Select, R3

continued on next page...



Pirates: Legend of Black Kat (PS2) cont.

Unlock Katarina's Secret Costumes (cont.)

If successful the game will play the secret costume music. Use R3 to view the many different costumes. You may start a new game or continue a game after selecting a costume. The costumes are categorized in binary and are as follows:

- 0000:0000 - Original outfit and hair color
- 0000:0001 - Blackbeard in purple
- 0000:0010 - Red hair with red and orange bikini
- 0000:0011 - Blue hair with orange and red bikini
- 0000:0100 - Tan, brown hair, orange and yellow bikini
- 0000:0101 - Blonde hair, orange and yellow bikini
- 0000:0110 - Blonde hair, pink bikini
- 0000:0111 - Blue hair, silver bikini
- 0000:1000 - Red hair, black bikini, black stockings
- 0000:1001 - Pink hair, shiny black body suit
- 0000:1010 - Blue hair, shiny copper body suit
- 0000:1011 - Purple hair, shiny silver body suit

Have fun and don't drool so much!

Unlock Lots of Booty (gold, not the other one)

To obtain lots and lots of Doubloons enter the following: While holding R1 and R2 down press: Triangle, R3, L1, Square, X, R3, Select, L3, Circle, L2.

Unlock SSX Music

To hear the SSX music, find the slope in Glacial Gulf. While holding R1 and R2 enter the following button combinations: L1, X, Triangle, L2, Square, Circle, L3, Select, R3, L3. Slide down the slope and groove to the kickin' beats.

Unlock the Invulnerable Wind Dancer

To make the Wind Dancer Invincible enter the following. Hold R1 and R2 while pressing: Select, Triangle, L1, X, R3, L2, Square, R3, Circle, L3. Now your ship will take no damage.

Valkyrie Cheerleader

The Valkyrie has a cheerleader routine. To see the routine, allow Katarina to be killed by the Valkyrie, and deal no damage to her.

Unlock the Galleon

Entering this code will unlock the Wind Dancer Galleon. While holding R1 and R2 press: L2, Triangle, R3, L3, X, Square, R3, Select, L1, Circle.

Unlock the Head of Kane (from Command and Conquer)

This code will make the head of Kane (from the Command and Conquer series) appear above anyone's head when they are poisoned. Hold R1 and R2 and press: Triangle, L2, L1, Square, L3, X, L3, Circle, R3, Select. The code will take effect after travelling to another map.



NBA 2K2 (Dreamcast)

Added Taunting

To unlock some extra jibes, go to the Code Selection screen and enter this code: sohappy.

Big Head Mode

Every game needs a big head mode. To get NBA 2K2's, go to the Code Selection screen and enter: heliumbrain.

See From the Ball's Perspective

As Chevy Chase once so eloquently said, "Be the ball." Enter that code (betheball) at the Code Selection screen.

Unlock 70's Clothes

To put your ballers in some fly, old school threads, go to the Code Selection screen and enter this code: the70slive.

Unlock Extra Players on the Hidden Team

To unlock even more players for the Hidden Team (make sure you enter that code first), go to the Code Selection screen and enter: Marrinson.

Unlock Hidden Team

To unlock a hidden team, go to the Codes Selection screen and enter: VC.

Unlock Infected Players

To unlock infected players, go to the Code Selection screen and enter this code: tvirus. Get it?

Unlock Monster Players

To unlock monster players, go to the Code Selection screen and enter this code: alienbrain.

Unlock Whacked Commentary

To unlock some interesting extra commentary, go to the Code Selection screen and enter this code: whatamisaying.

Star Wars: Rogue Leader: Rogue Squadron II (GCN)

Unlock Easy Level Select

This code unlocks everything but the Bonus Missions. Go to the Passcode screen and enter !??QWTTJ. This will reset the code fields. Then enter CLASSIC and you will hear R2-D2 beep.

Unlock TIE Fighter (The Easy Way)

To unlock the TIE Fighter without the hassle of actually being good at the game, go to the Passcode screen and enter ZT?!RGBA as a code. This will reset the code field. Then enter this code: DISPSBLE. You'll hear R2-D2 beep and whistle, confirming that you're a big cheater.



Star Wars: Rogue Leader: Rogue Squadron II (GCN) cont.

Unlock the Millenium Falcon (The Easy Way)

To unlock the Millenium Falcon the easy way, go to the Passcodes screen and enter this code: MVPQIU?A. The codes entry blanks will reset. Then enter OH!BUDDY. This will allow you to use the Millenium Falcon once you get to the Ison Corridor Ambush hangar.

Unlock the Naboo Starfighter (The Easy Way)

To unlock the Naboo Starfighter the easy way, go to the Passcodes screen and enter this code: CDYXF!?Q. The codes entry blanks will reset. Then enter ASEPONE! This will allow you to use the Naboo Starfighter once you get to the Ison Corridor Ambush hangar.

UFC: Tapout (Xbox)

Unlock Bruce Buffer as a Fighter

To unlock Bruce Buffer as a fighter, beat UFC Mode with all characters.

Unlock Femme Fatale

To unlock Femme Fatale, beat her in Arcade Mode (8th Match).

Unlock Ice-T

To unlock Ice-T, beat him in Arcade Mode (16th Match).

Unlock John McCarthy

To unlock John McCarthy, win UFC Mode with Bruce Buffer.

Unlock Mario Yamasaki

To unlock Mario Yamasaki, win UFC Mode with John McCarthy.

Unlock Mask

To unlock Mask, beat him in Arcade Mode (27th Match).

Unlock The Cat

Unlock The Cat as a playable character by beating her in Arcade Mode (4th Match).

Wreckless: The Yakuza Mission (Xbox)

Unlock Big 4WD

Find the car in mission A-4 (look for the question mark on the map), and hit it once. Complete the mission and the car will be unlocked.



Wreckless: The Yakuza Mission (Xbox) cont.

Unlock Big Trucks

Find the car in mission B-3 (look for the question mark on the map), and hit it once. Complete the mission and the car will be unlocked.

Unlock New Cars

Unlock Dragon-SPL: Complete mission A-1

Unlock Tiger-SPL: Complete mission A-8

Unlock AUV: Complete mission A-9

Unlock Super-Car: Complete mission B-1

Unlock Yakuza Car: Complete mission B-8

Unlock Tank: Complete mission B-9

Unlock New Replay Filters

You will gain new filters when you beat the following missions: A-9, A-10, B-9, B-10.

Unlock Taxi

Find the car in mission A-7 (look for the question mark on the map), and hit it once. Complete the mission and the car will be unlocked.

Unlock Vaultsafe

Find the car in mission B-2 (look for the question mark on the map), and hit it once. Complete the mission and the car will be unlocked.

Final Fantasy X (PS2)

Secret Locations

There are a number of secret locations in FFX that you can access by searching the world map with your airship, or by simply entering passwords.

Airship Coordinates: Use the following coordinates on the airship world map, then press X when you've found the spot. These coordinates are approximates, so move the cursor around a little and press X repeatedly to find the hidden areas.

- **Baaj Temple:** X:14 - Y:60 (find Lulu's Onion Knight and Anima here)
- **Sanubia Desert:** X:15 - Y:41 (find Tidus's Ascalon)
- **Omega Ruins:** X:74 - Y:36 (battle Ultima Weapon, steal items, and find spheres)
- **Besaid Falls:** X:31 - Y:73 (find Kihmari's Dragoon Lance)
- **MI-H'en Ruins:** X:34 - Y:58 (find Rikku's Sonar here)
- **Battle Site:** X:42 - Y:57 (find Lulu's Phantom Bangle here)

Airship Passwords: You can also input passwords to uncover secret locations. These passwords are hidden throughout the game in AI Bhed – but if you can't read it, here they are (note that they have to be entered in all caps):

- **GODHAND** – Let's you go to lower Mushroom Rock Road where you will find Rikku's legendary weapon.
- **VICTORIOUS** – Enter this to access a secret area in the ruins of Besaid. Climb the tree to get your hands on Rikku's powerful Victorious armor.
- **MURASAME** – Another secret area in the ruins of Besaid. You will find Auron's Murasame (ability: One MP Cost) here.



NBA 2002 **INSIDE** **DRIVE**



Microsoft has gone and done it...they've made a basketball game that seriously competes with everything on the market -- even *NBA 2K2*. Microsoft's first basketball offering, developed by High Voltage Software, boasts tight controls, excellent graphics, signature moves, and heaps of fun. To be honest, I haven't been able to tear myself away from this game for the last three weeks. Of course, doing what I do, this can only mean one thing: I had to write a mini-guide to pass what I've learned on to you. The guide covers basic techniques that will help you shut down opposing offenses and earn mad points. We've also got a full slate of secrets to make your Driving experience all the more enjoyable. ►



OFFENSE ::

THE NEED FOR SPEED

The first thing you'll notice about *Inside Drive* is that it's fast. Blazing, even. The best way to do everything in this game is at super speed. Unless you are trying to run out the clock, you should keep your finger on the turbo button when coming up the court. The turbo button will also make for more explosive dunks and crisper passes.

TAKE CARE OF THE ROCK

Holding on to the ball longer than the other team will usually lead to a win. To do this you'll have to be careful where you put the ball. Don't pass into double coverage. Don't pass across the lane. Don't make too many full-court passes. Don't try to pass it through guys...they'll pick it off.

Likewise, shield the ball from defenders when you're running the offense. Especially if you take possession of the ball in the paint, make sure you're not facing the D. You'll get the ball snagged away in no time. Instead, make sure you press the Left Trigger. From this position you can back down the defender, put up a hook shot, etc.

Don't take stupid, off-balance shots, because 90% of the time you'll miss. By taking careless shots, especially when you don't have players in position to rebound, you'll be needlessly casting the ball away. Work the ball around and go for a high percentage shot – either a dunk or a wide-open jumper.

IT'S CALLED INSIDE DRIVE, BUT...

The most effective form of driving is up the sides of the court. If you have a speedy point guard with a good shooter rating (and what point guard doesn't have that?), take the in-bound pass and turbo up the side of the court. Unless the opposing point guard is a dude like Stephon Marbury or Gary Payton, you can usually blow by the chump. As you get near the hoop, cut in slightly and put up a scoop shot. The only thing that can stop this is a center coming over to swat your shot...so be speedy! This strategy can lead to 40-50 points per game, if you want to beat a dead horse. Using this technique, I managed to make Steve Nash the leading scorer in the NBA. Sure he's the Terror From Santa Clara, but c'mon.



SECOND BEST PLAY IN THE GAME

If the turbo run up the sidelines doesn't do it for you, try this. Dribble the ball up court slowly with your point guard. Let everyone set up in the offensive end. Make sure you shield the ball away from pesky guards that try to poke it free. When you notice your power forward or center posting up beneath the basket, lob the ball in to him. Be smart about it, though. If the opposing player is in between you and the guy you're trying to pass to, work for a better angle. If a dude has a hand up in your face, bounce pass around him.

Since your guy is camped out under the hoop, just go up for the shot, pressing the analog stick toward the basket. This will cause your man to bury the rock hard. The faster you can execute this one-two punch (pass/dunk), the better your chances of avoiding the block. If you feed the ball to the guy down low a bunch of times with your point guard, this is a great way to get consistent double-doubles.

POSTING UP AND BACKING DOWN

Use the Left Trigger to back a player down in the paint. From this position you can take a short hook shot, or, if you're near the basket, just rock the rim. Another thing that works well is to roll off of the defender. To do this, hold the Left Trigger, then press either right or left on the left analog stick. Take your finger off of the Trigger and you'll roll off of the defender. If you're near enough the basket, just throw it down for instant points. This play isn't as effective as it is in *NBA 2K2*, but it works. ▶



THE THREE: SECRET LOVER OR WOMAN SCORNE

The three-point shot can seriously benefit your squad, but if you abuse it, the deep ball can end your hopes. Make sure you have plenty of room when you decide to launch, and make sure your player is equipped to drain it from out there. The pump fake can help you shake your defender, but if you overuse it, it will no longer work. For the most part, you don't have to bother setting screens to take these shots because the defender will usually give you enough room to pop. If you feel like you need a screen, you can set one up on your own without calling for it. Just go behind a forward who's camped out behind the line. Either your defender will be brushed off on him and you can shoot freely, or you can stand behind your man and drain it from there.

selfish play, you can score a whole lot of points. Instead of using set offenses, just keep moving the ball around the perimeter. With simple ball movement, lots of things will open up: three point opportunities, players open down low, and cutting forwards streaking to the hoop.

QUIT GOING TO THE COOKIE JAR!

Back when I played soccer, we had an expression: "Don't go to the cookie jar too often, or your hand will get slapped." In essence, this means don't do the same play over and over, or you'll get burned. This is especially true of the three-pointer. If you try it too many times in a game, you're going to miss many, many shots. The same holds true of feeding the ball inside for the slam. Mix it up or the defense will start sniffing out your plays and shut you down.

DEFENSE :: SPREAD YOUR WINGS

One of the most effective ways of shutting down the opposition is simply to open your arms. This can be accomplished by simply pressing the Left Trigger. If the opposing player is facing you, this will slow his progress to the hoop. Even with quick players, it is easy to keep them in front of you just by tweaking right or left as they move. ▶

You can only expect to put in 20-30% of your threes in any given game, and that's with a team who has at least one good long-range bomber. If you want to make 9 threes, that means you'll have to take 27 shots from out there. You can live and die by the three. If you miss a bunch in a row, change your strategy.

DON'T BOTHER RUNNING SET OFFENSES

You won't need them. With good ball movement and some





Playing the game straight up without ever using the Left Trigger will result in a lot of opposition dunks.

If a player is backing down, pressing the Left Trigger will put an arm bar across his back. This will prevent him from banging you down low, and often force him into a less-than-perfect shot. At all times, the closer you can get to an offensive player, the better. This will cut down on his ability to shoot, and it will make him pass, which increases your chances of picking off a pass or drawing a charge.

MOVE WITH THE BALL

Unlike some other games where it works to pick one position (usually the center) and just stick with that guy, it is best in *Inside Drive* to move around to wherever the ball is. That way you can take the nearest player and put immediate pressure on him. Since your teammates aren't as addicted to a defensive stance as you'll become, they'll give up more inside drives than you would if you're doing the guarding.

POKE AT THE BALL

When you are doing the guarding, you'll be able to try to create turnovers by poking at the ball while the defender is trying to move it up the court. This is done by pressing the

B button. Make sure you are the correct distance away from the offensive player when trying to swipe. If you get too close, you'll end up getting body and racking up fouls quickly. If a defender picks up his dribble, stop trying to steal. You'll only end up fouling.

Try to line up your hand with the ball when swiping. The collision detection in *Inside Drive* is pretty damn good. If you can see yourself get a mitt on the ball, you'll stand a good chance of popping it out of your opponent's hands. When the ball kicks to the floor, it will usually roll behind your opponent. Most of the time, you can scoop it up by simply running up court.

USE YOUR FOULS

It is rare to foul out of a game in *Inside Drive*, so use your fouls up. I'm not talking about mindlessly fouling a dude when he's on his way to the rack. I'm talking about swatting at a ball until it either comes free or you pick up the no-no. Each dude has five fouls to give and each team has four fouls per quarter before the other team is in the bonus, so swat away. If you get up to four fouls in a quarter, you'll want to back off, but until then, don't bother. There are just too many turnovers to gain.

NO DOUBLE TEAMS

Even if a player is scorching you for tons of points, the double team isn't the answer. All that will do is make him rack up assists. Instead of double teams, just rotate faster and learn to love the Left Trigger. Stingy man defense is the answer in this game. Period.

BUNCH UP IN THE LANE

If you've got a lot of bodies in the lane, it's tough to drive in there. It also makes rebounding a lot easier when four of your guys are underneath. The drawback to this is that you leave the opposition open for the long ball. Just make sure you have one guy roving on the outside to get a hand in the face of the shooter. The more guys you have near the hoop on the defensive end, the tougher you will make it to score.

BLOCK, BLOCK, BLOCK

Blocking is abundant in *NBA Inside Drive*, so don't be bashful about going up for a swat. Jump with the X button. ►





NBA 2002 INSIDE DRIVE

The best way to time it is to wait for a split second after the offensive player takes off, then sky up with your big mitts in the air.

It may seem obvious, but the bigger the player, the better the chance for a block. This doesn't mean that you shouldn't attempt a block with a point guard...it just means you'll have to have even better timing. Don't worry if the ball is going off the glass, either. Just because it kisses the backboard doesn't mean you can't bat that trash away from the hoop.

HINTS/SECRETS ::

BEST TEAMS

1. Sacramento Kings:

They've got it all: brains, brawn, looks and style. Mike Bibby is a bona fide three threat, and Chris Webber is, well, Chris Webber.

2. Dallas Mavericks:

It's almost criminal how many good shooters are on this squad.

3. LA Lakers:

Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant have one of the most well-rounded teams in the game. Inside or outside, it doesn't matter.

4. Toronto Raptors:

Vince Carter, the cover boy, makes this whole team better. He can easily rain for 30+ every night, which makes the rest of the team have to do a lot less.

Olajuwon is a monster inside.

5. LA Clippers:

Their inside game is explosive. If you're patient, this team can really tear it up.

NOT THE BEST TEAMS

1. Golden State Warriors:

There's bad and then there are the Warriors. At least they can blame their youth.

2. Chicago Bulls:

A first place contender in this category, the lifeless Bulls have almost nothing to recommend them.

3. Memphis Grizzlies:

If all you've got is Jason Williams, then you ain't got nothin'.

4. Cleveland Cavaliers:

Ouch. Can you say, "no stars"?



5. Washington Wizards:

Michael Jordan does not a good team make. Come to think of it, Michael Jordan does not a good player make, at least in this game.

SECRETS ABOUNDING

One of the best things about *NBA Inside Drive 2002* is the abundance of cheats. To activate them, go to the Options menu and open the Codes screen.

Infinite Speed

To make it so that your players never tire, go to the Codes screen in the Options menu and enter the code **CARDIOMAN**.

Play With Soccer Ball

To play with a soccer ball, enter the code **HOOLIGAN** at the Codes screen of the Options menu.

Play With ABA Ball

To play with the best basketball ever made, the red-white-and-blue ABA Ball, go to the Codes screen in the Options menu and enter this code: **OLDSCHOOL**. Enter the code again to turn it off.

Play With WNBA Ball

To play with the WNBA ball (white and orange), go to the Codes screen in the Options menu and enter the code **GOTGAME**. To turn the code off again, reenter the code.

Unlock Chicago Skyline Court

To unlock the Chicago Skyline court, go to the Codes screen in the Options menu. Enter the code **WINDYCITY** to unlock the Chicago Skyline court. You can only use it in Exhibition mode. Enter the code a second time to erase its effects.

Unlock Tiny Players

To make all of the players on the court miniature, go to the Codes screen in the Options menu and enter the phrase **SMALLSHOES**.

Unlock Xbox Ball

To unlock the Xbox ball, go to the Codes screen in the Options menu and enter **BACHMAN**.

Cream Collon ::



The sweetest things come in smallest packages. Just don't get too close...you never know what might come out of the hole.

IGN Design Most Hated ::

- 1:: All: Editors that can't get in their top image requests by 3!
- 2:: Scott: Getting Titus' ultimate weapon in Final Fantasy X.
- 3:: Marty: When Mia, the cat, throws up the floor.
- 4:: Dave: Commuting from San Jose, just so Scott feels like he has a design team to manage.
- 5:: Scott: That last comment, plus having to provide filler text on Unplugged.

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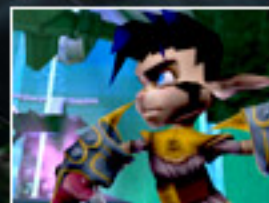
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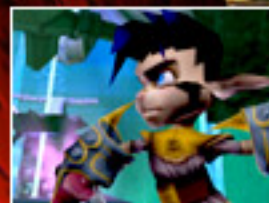


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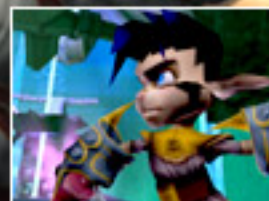
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